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To
IVOR MAXSE
Trainer of Troops for War

PREFACE

My original study of the strategy of indirect approach was written in 1929. Published under the title *The Decisive Wars of History*, it has been out of print for some time. In the years following its publication, I continued to explore this line of thought, and from the results of such further study compiled a number of supplementary notes, which were privately circulated. Since the course of the present war has provided further examples of the value of the indirect approach, and thereby given fresh point to the thesis, the issue of a new edition of the book provides an opportunity to include these hitherto unpublished notes—in extension of Chapter XI. The other principal additions to Part I are a chapter (IV) devoted to the Byzantine campaigns, of Belisarius in particular, which T. E. Lawrence had urged me to include; and a chapter (XII) on the ‘Concentrated Essence of Strategy’. I have, also, amplified the parts of the book which deal with the campaigns of Hannibal, Scipio, Caesar, Cromwell, Marlborough, Frederick, Napoleon, and Moltke. And at the end of the book comes a new chapter, on Hitler’s strategy.

When, in the course of studying a long series of military campaigns, I first came to perceive the superiority

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of the indirect over the direct approach, I was looking merely for light upon strategy. With deepening reflection, however, I began to realize that the indirect approach had a much wider application—that it was a law of life in all spheres: a truth of philosophy. Its fulfilment was seen to be the key to practical achievement in dealing with any problem where the human factor predominates, and a conflict of wills tends to spring from an underlying concern for interests. In all such cases, the direct assault of new ideas provokes a stubborn resistance, thus intensifying the difficulty of producing a change of outlook. Conversion is achieved more easily and rapidly by unsuspected infiltration of a different idea or by an argument that turns the flank of instinctive opposition. The indirect approach is as fundamental to the realm of politics as to the realm of sex. In commerce, the suggestion that there is a bargain to be secured is far more potent than any direct appeal to buy. And in any sphere it is proverbial that the surest way of gaining a superior's acceptance of a new idea is to persuade him that it is his idea! As in war, the aim is to weaken resistance before attempting to overcome it; and the effect is best attained by drawing the other party out of his defences.

This idea of the indirect approach is closely related to all problems of the influence of mind upon mind—the most influential factor in human history. Yet it is hard to reconcile with another lesson: that true conclusions can only be reached, or approached, by pursuing the truth without regard to where it may lead or what its effect may be—on different interests.

History bears witness to the vital part that the 'prophets' have played in human progress—which is evidence of the ultimate practical value of expressing unreservedly the truth as one sees it. Yet it also becomes clear that the acceptance and spreading of their vision

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has always depended on another class of men—'leaders' who had to be philosophical strategists, striking a compromise between truth and men's receptivity to it. Their effect has often depended as much on their own limitations in perceiving the truth as on their practical wisdom in proclaiming it.

The prophets must be stoned; that is their lot, and the test of their self-fulfilment. But a leader who is stoned may merely prove that he has failed in his function through a deficiency of wisdom, or through confusing his function with that of a prophet. Time alone can tell whether the effect of such a sacrifice redeems the apparent failure as a leader that does honour to him as a man. At the least, he avoids the more common fault of leaders—that of sacrificing the truth to expediency without ultimate advantage to the cause. For whoever habitually suppresses the truth in the interests of tact will produce a deformity from the womb of his thought.

Is there a practical way of combining progress towards the attainment of truth with progress towards its acceptance? A possible solution of the problem is suggested by reflection on strategic principles—which point to the importance of maintaining an object consistently and, also, of pursuing it in a way adapted to circumstances. Opposition to the truth is inevitable, especially if it takes the form of a new idea, but the degree of resistance can be diminished—by giving thought not only to the aim but to the method of approach. Avoid a frontal attack on a long established position; instead, seek to turn it by a flank movement, so that a more penetrable side is exposed to the thrust of truth. But, in any such indirect approach, take care not to diverge from the truth—for nothing is more fatal to its real advancement than to lapse into untruth.

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The meaning of these reflections may be made clearer by illustration from one's own experience. Looking back on the stages by which various fresh ideas gained acceptance, it can be seen that the process was eased when they could be presented, not as something radically new, but as the revival in modern terms of a time-honoured principle or practice that had been forgotten. This required not deception, but care to trace the connection—since 'there is nothing new under the sun'. A notable example was the way that the opposition to mechanization was diminished by showing that the mobile armoured vehicle—the fast-moving tank—was fundamentally the heir of the armoured horseman, and thus the natural means of reviving the decisive role which cavalry had played in past ages.

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The first chapter of this book is in a general sense the preface, explaining its purpose, scope, and theme. These have evolved more gradually and less consecutively than is usual in the preparation of a book, and as the guiding idea has been that of an attempt to distil the essence of one's reading and reflection over a number of years, so the historical narrative is a condensed product of the notes made when studying each of the several wars epitomized. It would have been easier to have woven these notes into a narrative of greater length, but the desire that the 'wood' should not be obscured by the 'trees' has prompted a severe pruning of unessential facts. If the foliage is too bare for the taste of some readers, I would ask their forgiveness on the score that, for the specialized student, this book is intended as a guide in historical study rather than as a compendium of history.

I would also utilize this 'preliminary' preface to acknowledge the kindness of those who have read and criticized the typescript and proofs at various stages. For helpful comments and suggestions my thanks are due, in particular, to my friends, Brigadiers J. G. Dill, B. D. Fisher, J. F. C. Fuller, H. Karslake, Colonel the Viscount Gort, Mr. E. G. Hawke, and T.E.S.

(These were their ranks in 1929 when the original edition was published. They are now General Sir John Dill, Lieut.-General

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Sir Bertie Fisher, Major-General J. F. C. Fuller, Lieut.-General Sir Henry Karslake, and General the Viscount Gort. The late T. E. Lawrence was then serving in the ranks of the Royal Air Force under the name of T. E. Shaw, legally assumed for the time, and for reasons of discretion wished only his initials to appear in the acknowledgement.)

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PART I

Chapter I

HISTORY AS PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE

'Fools say that they learn by experience. I prefer to profit by others' experience.' This famous saying, quoted of Bismarck but by no means original to him, has a peculiar bearing on military questions. For it has often been remarked that the soldier, unlike the followers of other professions, has but rare opportunities to practise his profession. Indeed, it might even be argued that in a literal sense the profession of arms is not a profession at all, but merely 'casual employment'. And, paradoxically, that it ceased to be a profession when the soldier of fortune gave way to the 'professional soldier'—when mercenary troops who were employed and paid for the purpose of a war were replaced by standing armies which continued to be paid when there was no war.

This logical, if somewhat extreme argument recalls the excuse often made in the past for paying officers a rate inadequate to live on, and by some of those officers for doing an inadequate day's work—the contention being that the officer's pay was not a working salary but a 'retainer', paid to him for the benefit of having his services available in case of war.

If the argument—that strictly there is no 'profession of arms'—will not hold good in most armies to-day

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on the score of work, it is inevitably strengthened on the score of practice by the increasing infrequency of wars. Are we then left with the conclusion that armies are doomed to become more and more 'amateurish'—in the popular bad sense of that much-abused and misused word? For, obviously, even the best of peace training is more 'theoretical' than 'practical' experience.

But Bismarck's aphorism throws a different and more encouraging light on the problem. It helps us to realize that there are two forms of practical experience, direct and indirect. And that of the two, indirect practical experience may be the more valuable: because infinitely wider. Even in the most active career, especially a soldier's career, the scope and possibilities of direct experience are extremely limited. In contrast to the military, the medical profession has incessant practice—yet the great achievements in medicine and surgery have usually been due to the research worker and not to the general practitioner.

Direct experience is inherently too limited to form a secure foundation for either theory or application. At the best it produces an atmosphere, which is of value in drying and hardening the structure of our thought. The greater value of indirect experience lies in its greater variety and extent. 'History is universal experience'—the experience not of another, but of many others under manifold conditions.

Here we have the rational justification for military history—its preponderant practical value in the training and mental development of a soldier. But the benefit depends, as with all experience, on its breadth: on how closely it approaches the definition quoted above; and on the method of studying it.

Soldiers universally concede the general truth of Napoleon's much-quoted dictum that in war 'the moral

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is to the physical as three to one'. The actual arithmetical proportion may be worthless, for morale is apt to decline if weapons be inadequate, and the strongest will is of little use if it is inside a dead body. But although the moral and physical factors are inseparable and indivisible, the saying gains its immortal value because it expresses the idea of the predominance of moral factors in all military decisions. On them constantly turns the issue of war and battle. And in the history of war they form the more constant factors, changing only in degree—whereas the physical factors are fundamentally different in almost every war and every military situation.

This realization affects the whole question of the study of military history for practical use. The method in the last few generations has been to select one or two campaigns, and to study them exhaustively as a means of developing both our minds and a theory of war. But the continual changes in military means from war to war, entail a grave danger, even a certainty, that our outlook will be narrow, and the lessons fallacious. In the physical sphere, the one constant factor is that means and conditions are invariably inconstant.

In contrast, human nature varies but slightly in its reaction to danger. Some men by race, by environment, or by training, may be less sensitive than others, but the difference is one of degree, not fundamental. The more localized the situation, and our study, the more disconcerting and less calculable is such a difference of degree. It may prevent any exact calculation of the resistance which men will offer in any situation, but it does not impair the judgement that they will offer less if taken by surprise than if they are on the alert; less if they are weary and hungry than if they are fresh and well fed. The broader the psychological

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survey the better foundation it affords for deductions.

The predominance of the psychological over the physical, and its greater constancy, point to the conclusion that the foundation of any theory of war should be as broad as possible. An intensive study of one campaign unless based on an extensive knowledge of the whole history of war is as likely to lead us into pitfalls as onto the peaks of military achievement. But if a certain effect is seen to follow a certain cause in a score or more cases, in different epochs and diverse conditions, there is ground for regarding this cause as an integral part of any theory of war.

The thesis set forth in this book is the product of such an 'extensive' examination. It might, indeed, be termed the compound effect of certain causes—these being connected with my task as military editor of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. For while I had previously delved into various periods of military history according to my inclination, this task compelled a general survey of all, often against my inclination. And a surveyor—even a tourist, if you will—has at least a wide perspective and can at least take in the general lie of the land, where the miner knows only his own seam. During this survey one impression grew ever stronger—that throughout the ages decisive results in war have only been reached when the approach has been indirect. In strategy the longest way round is apt to be the shortest way home.

More and more clearly has the fact emerged that a direct approach to one's mental object, or physical objective, along the 'line of natural expectation' for the opponent, has ever tended to, and usually produced negative results. The reason has been expressed vividly in Napoleon's dictum that 'the moral is to the physical as three to one'. It may be expressed scientifically by saying that, while the strength of an enemy country

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lies outwardly in its numbers and resources, these are fundamentally dependent upon stability or 'equilibrium' of control, morale, and supply.

To move along the line of natural expectation consolidates the opponent's equilibrium, and, by stiffening it, augments his resisting power. In war, as in wrestling, the attempt to throw the opponent without loosening his foothold and balance can only result in self-exhaustion, increasing in disproportionate ratio to the effective strain put upon him. Victory by such a method can only be possible through an immense margin of superior strength in some form, and, even so, tends to lose decisiveness. In contrast, an examination of military history—not of one period but of its whole course—brings out the point that in almost all the decisive campaigns the dislocation of the enemy's psychological and physical balance has been the vital prelude to a successful attempt at his overthrow.

This dislocation has been produced by a strategic indirect approach, intentional or fortuitous. It may take varied forms, as our analysis reveals. For the strategy of indirect approach is inclusive of, but wider than, the *manœuvre sur les derrières* which General Camon's researches showed as being the constant aim and key-method of Napoleon in his conduct of operations. While Camon was concerned primarily with the logistical moves—the factors of time, space, and communications—this analysis seeks to probe deeper to the psychological foundations, and, in so doing, finds an underlying relationship between many strategical operations which have no outward resemblance to a manœuvre against the enemy's rear—yet are, none the less definitely, vital examples of the 'strategy of indirect approach'.

To trace this relationship and to determine the character of the operations, it is not necessary, and is in-

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deed irrelevant, to tabulate the numerical strengths and the details of supply and transport. Our concern is simply with the historical effects in a comprehensive series of cases, and with the logistical or psychological moves which led up to them.

If similar effects follow fundamentally similar moves, in conditions which vary widely in nature, scale, and date, there is clearly an underlying connection from which we can logically deduce a common cause. And the more widely the conditions vary, the firmer is this deduction.

But the objective value of a broad survey of war is not limited to the research for new and true doctrine. If a broad survey is an essential foundation for any theory of war, it is equally necessary for the ordinary military student who seeks to develop his own outlook and judgement. Otherwise his knowledge of war will be like an inverted pyramid balanced precariously on a slender apex. At a university, the student only comes to post-graduate research after he has had a general grounding in history as a schoolboy, and then, as an undergraduate, has developed this background by the study of the constitutional and economic aspects, and of special periods. Yet the military student, who commonly comes late to his subject, when the mind is less supple than in adolescence, is expected to begin at a point corresponding with post-graduate research.

Chapter II

GREEK WARS—EPAMINONDAS, PHILIP, AND ALEXANDER

The most natural starting-point for a survey is the first 'Great War' in European history—the Great Persian War. We cannot expect much guidance from a period when strategy was in its infancy; but the name of Marathon is too deeply stamped on the mind and imagination of all readers of history to be disregarded. It was still more impressed on the imagination of the Greeks; hence its importance came to be exaggerated by them and, through them, by Europeans in all subsequent ages. Yet by the reduction of its importance to juster proportions, its strategical significance is increased. The Persian invasion of 490 B.C. was a comparatively small expedition intended to teach Eretria and Athens—petty states in the eyes of Darius—to mind their own business and abstain from encouraging revolt among Persia's Greek subjects in Asia Minor.

Eretria was destroyed and its inhabitants deported for resettlement on the Persian Gulf. Next came the turn of Athens, where the ultra-democratic party was known to be waiting to aid the Persian intervention against their own conservative party. The Persians,

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instead of making a direct advance on Athens, landed at Marathon, twenty-four miles north-east of it. Thereby they could calculate on drawing the Athenian army towards them, thus facilitating the seizure of power in Athens by their adherents, whereas a direct attack on the city would have hampered such a rising, perhaps even have rallied its force against them; and in any case have given them the extra difficulty of a siege.

If this was their calculation, the bait succeeded. The Athenian army marched out to Marathon to meet the supposed main mass of the enemy's armed forces—most literally fulfilling modern military doctrine. Unluckily for the Persians, a change of feeling had occurred among their democratic adherents in Athens. Even so, they proceeded to execute the next step in their strategical plan. Under the protection of a covering force, they re-embarked the rest of the army in order to move it round to Phalerum, land there, and make a spring at unguarded Athens.

Thanks to the energy of Miltiades, the Athenians took their one chance by striking without delay at the covering force. And in the battle, the superior armour and longer spears of the Greeks, always their supreme assets against the Persians, combined with their novel tactics to give them the victory—although the fight was harder than patriotic legend suggested, and most of the covering force got safely away on the ships. With still more creditable energy the Athenians counter-marched rapidly back to their city, and this rapidity, combined with the dilatoriness of the disaffected party, saved them. For when the Athenian army was back in Athens, and the Persians saw that a siege was unavoidable, they sailed back to Asia—as their merely punitive object was not worth purchasing at a heavy price.

Ten years passed before the Persians made a real

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effort to repeat and reinforce the intended lesson. The Greeks had been slow to profit by the warning, and it was not until 487 B.C. that Athens began the expansion of her fleet—which was to be the decisive factor. Thus it can with truth be said that Greece and Europe were saved by a revolt in Egypt—which kept Persia's attention occupied from 486 to 484—as well as by the death of Darius, ablest of the Persian rulers of that epoch.

When the menace developed, in 481, this time on a grand scale, its very magnitude not only consolidated the Greek factions and states against it, but compelled Xerxes to make a direct approach to his goal. For the army was too big to be transported by sea, and so was compelled to take an overland route. And it was too big to supply itself, so that the fleet had to be used for this purpose. The army was tied to the coast, and the navy tied to the army—each tied by the leg. Thus the Greeks could be sure as to the line along which to expect the enemy's approach, and the Persians were unable to depart from it. The nature of the country afforded the Greeks a series of points at which they could firmly block the line of natural expectation and, as Grundy has remarked, but for the Greeks' own dissensions of interest and counsel 'it is probable that the invaders would never have got south of Thermopylae'. As it was, history gained an immortal story and it was left to the Greek fleet to dislocate the invasion irredeemably by defeating the Persian fleet at Salamis—while Xerxes and the Persian army watched helplessly the destruction of what was not merely their fleet, but, more vitally, their source of supply.

It is worth note that the opportunity for this decisive naval battle was obtained by a ruse which might be classified as a form of indirect approach—Themistocles's message to Xerxes that the Greek fleet was ripe for treacherous surrender. The deception, which

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drew the Persian fleet into the narrow straits where their superiority of numbers was discounted, proved all the more effective because past experience endowed the message with plausibility. Indeed, Themistocles' message was inspired by his fear that the allied Peloponnesian commanders would withdraw from Salamis, as they had advocated in the council of war—thus leaving the Athenian fleet to fight alone, or giving the Persians a chance to use their superior numbers in the open sea. On the other side there was only one voice raised against Xerxes' eager desire for battle. It was that of the sailor-queen, Artemisia, from Halicarnassus, who urged the contrary plan of abstaining from a direct assault and, instead, co-operating with the Persian land forces in a move against the Peloponnesus. She argued that the Peloponnesian naval contingents would react to such a threat by sailing for home, and thereby cause the disintegration of the Greek fleet. It would seem that her anticipation was as well justified as Themistocles' anxiety; that such a withdrawal would have been carried out the very next morning but for the fact that the Persian galleys blocked the outlets, preparatory to attack. When the attackers advanced through the narrow straits, the Greek galleys backed away; the Persian galleys thereupon quickened their rate of rowing, and as a result became a congested mass, helplessly exposed to the counter-stroke which the Greek galleys delivered from either flank.

In the seventy years that followed, one of the chief factors which restrained the Persians from further intervention in Greece would seem to have been the power of indirect approach, to the Persians' own communications, that Athens could wield—this deduction is supported by the prompt revival of such interference after the destruction of the Athenian fleet at Syra-

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cuse. Historically, it is worth note that the use of strategic mobility for an indirect approach was realized and exploited much earlier in sea than in land warfare. The natural reason is that only in a late stage of development did armies come to depend upon 'lines of communication' for their supply. Fleets, however, were used to operate against the sea-borne communications, or means of supply, of a hostile country; and once this conception was established it was natural to apply it as a means to a naval end—a 'military' end at sea.

With the passing of the Persian menace, the sequel to Salamis was the rise of Athens to the ascendancy in Greek affairs. This ascendancy was ended by the Peloponnesian War (431–404 B.C.). But the extravagant duration of these twenty-seven years of warfare, and their terrible drain—not only on the chief adversaries but on the luckless would-be neutrals—may be traced to the fluctuating and often purposeless strategy into which both sides repeatedly drifted.

In the first phase Sparta and her allies attempted a direct invasion of Attica. They were foiled by Pericles' war policy of refusing battle on land while using the superior Athenian army to wear down the enemy's will by devastating raids.

The term 'war policy' is used of intent, although the phrase 'Periclean strategy' is almost as familiar as that of 'Fabian strategy' in a later age. Clear-cut nomenclature is essential to clear thought, and the term 'strategy' is best confined to its literal meaning of 'generalship'—the actual direction of military force, as distinct from the policy governing its employment and combining it with other weapons: economic, political, psychological. For such war policy the term 'grand strategy' has been coined, but, apt as it is, its meaning is not so easily grasped. Hence although I

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prefer 'grand strategy' and have often used it elsewhere, I shall here normally use the term 'war policy'—because analysis and classification are the dominant purposes of this examination of history.

In contrast to a strategy of indirect approach which seeks to dislocate the enemy's balance in order to produce a decision, the Periclean plan was simply a war policy with the aim of gradually draining the enemy's endurance in order to convince him that he could not gain a decision. Unluckily for Athens, an importation of plague tipped the scales against her in this moral and economic attrition campaign. Hence in 426 B.C. the Periclean strategy was made to give place to the direct offensive strategy of Cleon and Demosthenes. This cost more, and succeeded no better, despite some brilliant tactical successes. And in the early winter of 424 B.C. Brasidas, Sparta's ablest soldier, wiped out all the advantage that Athens had painfully won: by a strategic move directed against the roots, instead of the trunk, of the enemy power. Passing by Athens itself, which he ignored, he marched swiftly north through the length of Greece and struck at the Athenian dominion in Chalcidice—which has been aptly termed the 'Achilles heel of the Athenian empire'. By a combination of military force with the promise of freedom and protection to all cities which revolted against her, he so shook the hold of Athens there that he drew her main forces thither. At Amphipolis they suffered disaster, and Cleon, death. Though Brasidas himself fell in the moment of victory, Athens was glad to conclude a negative peace with Sparta.

In the succeeding years of pseudo-peace, repeated Athenian expeditions failed to regain the lost footing in Chalcidice. Then, as a last offensive resort, Athens undertook an expedition against Syracuse, the key to Sicily, whence came the overseas food supply of Sparta

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and the Peloponnese generally. As a war policy of indirect approach it had the defect of striking, not at the enemy's actual partners, but rather at his business associates. And thereby, instead of distracting the enemy's forces, it drew fresh forces into opposition.

Nevertheless, the moral and economic results of success might well have changed the whole balance of the war if there had not been an almost unparalleled chain of blunders in execution. Alcibiades, the author of the plan, was recalled from his joint command by the intrigues of his political enemies. Rather than return to be put on trial for sacrilege, and meet a certain death sentence, he fled to Sparta—there to advise the the other side how to thwart his own plan. And the stubborn opponent of the plan, Nicias, was left in command to carry it out. Instead by his obstinate stupidity, he carried it to ruin.

With her army lost at Syracuse, Athens staved off defeat at home by the use of her fleet, and in the nine years of sea warfare which followed she came within reach not only of an advantageous peace but of the restoration of her empire. Her prospects, however, were dramatically extinguished by the Spartan admiral, Lysander, in 405 B.C. In the words of the *Cambridge Ancient History* 'his plan of campaign . . . was to avoid fighting, and reduce the Athenians to extremities by attacking their empire at its most vulnerable points. . . .' The first clause is hardly accurate, for his plan was not so much an evasion of battle as an indirect approach to it—so that he might obtain the opportunity when, and where, the odds were heavily in his favour. By skilful and mystifying changes of course, he reached the entrance to the Dardanelles and there lay in wait for the Pontic grain-ships on their way to Athens. 'Since the grain-supply of Athens was a life interest,' the Athenian commanders 'hurried

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with their entire fleet of 180 ships to safeguard it.' For four successive days they tried in vain to tempt Lysander to battle, while he gave them every encouragement to think they had cornered him. Thus, instead of retiring to revictual in the safe harbour of Sestos, they stayed in the open strait opposite him at Aegospotamoi. On the fifth day, when most of the crews had gone ashore to collect food, he suddenly sallied out, captured almost the whole fleet without a blow, and 'in one single hour brought the longest of wars to an end'.

In this twenty-seven years' struggle, where scores of direct approaches failed, usually to the injury of those who made them, the scales were definitely turned against Athens by Brasidas's move against her Chalcidice 'root'. The best-founded hopes of a recovery came with Alcibiades's indirect approach—on the plane of grand strategy—to Sparta's economic root in Sicily. And the *coup de grace*, after another ten years' prolongation, was given by a tactical indirect approach at sea, which was itself the sequel to a fresh indirect approach in grand strategy. For it should be noted that the opportunity was created by menacing the Athenians' 'national' lines of communication. By taking an economic objective Lysander could hope at the least to drain their strength; through the exasperation and fear thus generated, he was able to produce conditions favourable to surprise and so obtain a swift military decision.

With the fall of the Athenian empire the next phase in Greek history is the assumption by Sparta of the headship of Greece. Our next question is, therefore—what was the decisive factor in ending Sparta's ascendancy? The answer is—a man, and his contribution to the science and art of warfare. In the years immediately preceding the rise of Epaminondas, Thebes had

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released herself from Sparta's dominion by the method later christened Fabian, of refusing battle—a war policy of indirect approach, but a strategy merely of evasion—while Spartan armies wandered unopposed through Boeotia. This method gained them time to develop a picked professional force, famous as the Sacred Band, which formed the spear-head of their forces subsequently. It also gained time and opportunity for disaffection to spread, and for Athens, thereby relieved of land pressure, to concentrate her energy and man-power on the revival of her fleet. Thus in 374 the Athenian confederacy, which included Thebes, found Sparta willing to grant an advantageous peace. Although quickly broken, through an Athenian maritime adventure, a fresh peace congress was convened three years later—by which time the Athenians were tired of war. Here Sparta regained at the council table much that she had lost on the field of war, and succeeded in isolating Thebes from her allies. Thereupon Sparta eagerly turned to crush Thebes. But on advancing into Boeotia, her army, traditionally superior in quality and actually superior in number (10,000 to 6,000) was decisively defeated at Leuctra by the new model army of Thebes under Epaminondas, perhaps the most original genius in military history.

He not only broke away from tactical methods established by the experience of centuries, but in tactics, strategy, and grand strategy alike laid the foundations on which subsequent masters have built. Even his structural designs have survived or been revived. For in tactics the 'oblique order' which Frederick made famous was but a slight elaboration of the method of Epaminondas. At Leuctra, reversing custom, Epaminondas placed not only his best men but the most on his left wing, and then, holding back his weak centre and right, developed a crushing superiority against one

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wing of the enemy—the wing where their leader stood, and thus the key of their will.

A year after Leuctra, Epaminondas led the forces of the newly formed Arcadian League in a march upon virgin Sparta itself. This march into the heart of the Peloponnesian peninsula, so long Sparta's unchallenged domain, was distinguished by the manifold nature of its indirect approach. It was made in mid-winter and by three separated, but converging, columns—thus 'distracting' the forces and direction of the opposition. For this alone it would be almost unique in ancient, or, indeed, in pre-Napoleonic warfare. But with still deeper strategical insight, Epaminondas, after his force had united at Caryae, twenty miles short of Sparta, slipped past the capital and moved up from the rear. This move had the additional and calculated advantage of enabling the invaders to rally to themselves considerable bodies of Helots and other disaffected elements. The Spartans, however, succeeded in checking this dangerous internal movement by an emergency promise of emancipation; and the timely arrival at Sparta of strong reinforcements from her Peloponnesian allies thwarted the chance of the city falling without a set siege.

Epaminondas soon realized that the Spartans would not be lured into the open, and that a prolonged investment meant the dwindling of his own heterogeneous force. He therefore relinquished the blunted strategic weapon for a more subtle weapon—a war policy of indirect approach, true grand strategy. At Mount Ithome, the natural citadel of Messenia, he founded a city as the capital of a new Messenian state, established there all the insurgent elements that had joined him, and used the booty he had gained during the invasion as an endowment for the new state. This was to be a check and counterpoise to Sparta in

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southern Greece; by its secure establishment she lost half her territory and more than half her serfs. Through Epaminondas's foundation of Megalopolis, in Arcadia, as a further check, Sparta was hemmed in both politically and by a chain of fortresses, so that the economic roots of her military supremacy were severed. When Epaminondas left the Peloponnese, after only a few months' campaign, he had won no victory in the field, yet his war policy had definitely dislocated the foundations of Spartan power.

The politicians at home, however, had desired a destructive military success, and were disappointed at not achieving it. And with Epaminondas's subsequent, if temporary, supersession, Theban democracy—by short-sighted policy and blundering diplomacy—forfeited the advantage won for it. Thus it enabled its Arcadian allies, repudiating gratitude in growing conceit and ambition, to dispute Theban leadership. In 362, Thebes was driven to a choice between the forcible reassertion of her authority and the sacrifice of her prestige. Her move against Arcadia caused the Greek states to divide afresh into two opposing coalitions. Happily for Thebes, not only was Epaminondas at her service, but also the fruits of his grand strategy—for his creations of Messenia and Megalopolis now contributed not merely a check to Sparta but a make-weight to the Theban side.

Marching into the Peloponnese, he joined forces with his Peloponnesian allies at Tegea, thus placing himself between Sparta and the forces of the other anti-Theban states, which had concentrated at Mantinea. The Spartans marched by a roundabout route to join their allies, whereupon Epaminondas made a sudden spring by night, with a mobile column, at Sparta itself, and was only foiled because a deserter warned the Spartans in time for them to double back

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to their city. He then determined to seek a decision by battle and advanced from Tegea against Mantinea, some twelve miles distant, along an hour-glass shaped valley. The enemy took up a strong position at the mile-wide 'waist'.

With his advance we are on the borderline between strategy and tactics ; but this is a case where arbitrary division is false, all the more because the sources of his victory are to be found in his indirect approach to the actual contact. At first, Epaminondas marched direct towards the enemy camp, causing them to form up in battle order facing his line of approach—the line of natural expectation. But when several miles distant, he suddenly changed direction to the left, turning in beneath a projecting spur. This surprise manœuvre threatened to take in enfilade the enemy's right wing ; and to dislocate still further their battle dispositions, he halted, making his troops ground arms as if about to encamp. The deception succeeded ; the enemy were induced to relax their battle order, allowing men to fall out and the horses to be unbridled. Meanwhile, Epaminondas was actually completing his battle dispositions—similar to, but an improvement on, those of Leuctra—behind a screen of light troops. Then, on a signal, the Theban army took up its arms and swept forward—to a victory already assured by the dislocation of the enemy's balance. Unhappily, Epaminondas himself fell in the moment of victory, and in his death, contributed not the least of his lessons to subsequent generations—by an exceptionally dramatic and convincing proof that an army and a state succumb quickest to paralysis of the brain.

The next decisive campaign is that which, just over twenty years later, yielded to Macedon the supremacy of Greece. All the more significant because of its momentous results, this campaign is an illuminating

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example of how policy and strategy can assist each other and also how strategy can turn topographical obstacles from its disadvantage to its advantage. The challenger, though a Greek, was an 'outsider', while Thebes and Athens were united in the effort to form a Pan-Hellenic League to oppose the growing power of Macedon. They found a foreign backer in a Persian king—strange comment upon past history and human nature. Once more it is the challenger who is seen to have grasped the value of the indirect approach. Even the pretext for Philip of Macedon's attempt to secure the supremacy was indirect, for he was merely invited by the Amphictyonic Council to aid in punishing Amphissa, in western Boeotia, for a sacrilegious offence. And it is probable that Philip himself prompted this invitation, which rallied Thebes and Athens against him, but at least ensured the benevolent neutrality of other states.

After marching southwards, Philip suddenly diverged at Cytinium from the route to Amphissa—the natural line of expectation—and instead occupied and fortified Elatea. That initial change of direction foreshadowed his wider political aims; at the same time it suggests a strategic motive which events tend to confirm. The allied Thebans and Boeotians barred the passes into Boeotia, both the western route from Cytinium to Amphissa, and the eastern pass of Parapotamii, leading from Elatea to Chaeronea. The first route may be likened to the upper stroke of an L, the route from Cytinium to Elatea as the lower stroke, and the prolongation across the pass to Chaeronea as the upward finish of the lower stroke.

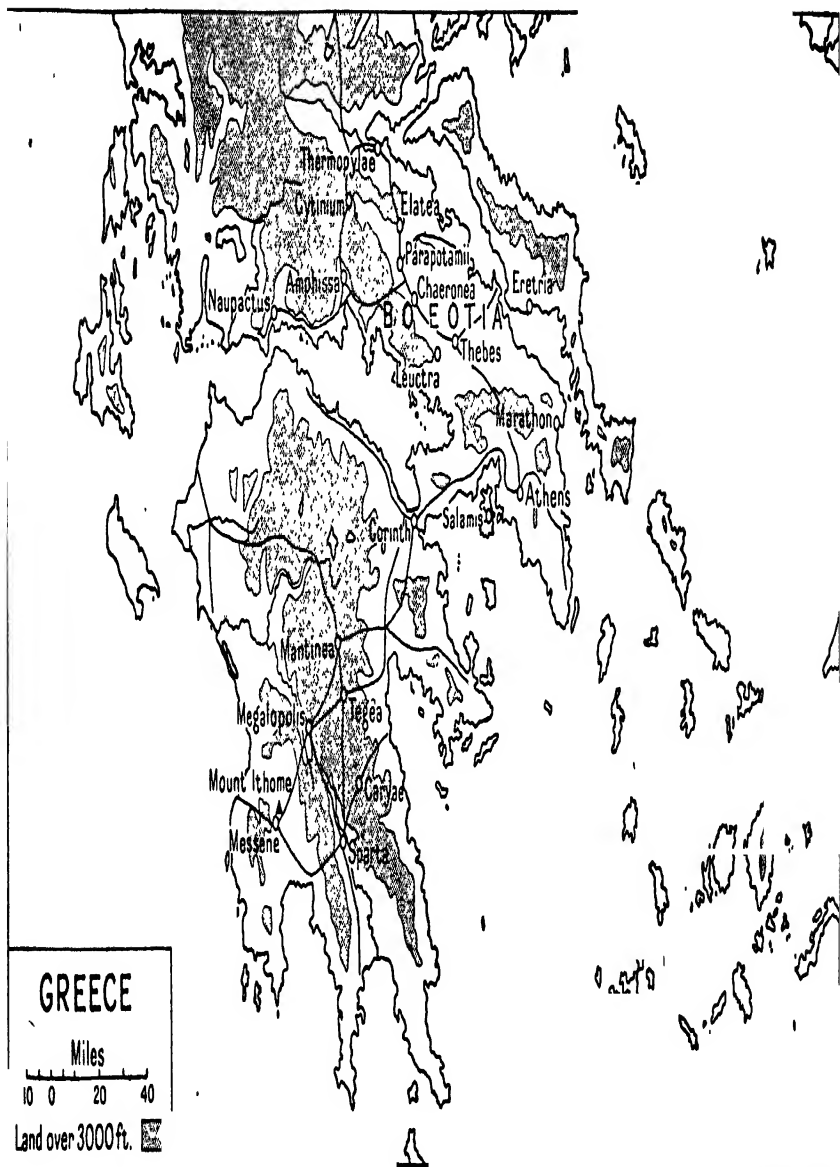
Before initiating a further military move, Philip took fresh steps to weaken his opponents—politically, by forwarding the restoration of Phocian communities earlier dispersed by the Thebans; morally, by

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getting himself proclaimed as the champion of the God of Delphi.

Then he sprang suddenly, in the spring of 338 B.C., after clearing his path by a stratagem. Having already, by occupying Elatea, distracted the strategic attention of the enemy towards the eastern route—which had now become the line of natural expectation—he distracted the tactical attention of the force barring the western route by arranging that a letter which spoke of his return to Thrace should fall into its hands. Then he moved swiftly from Cytinium, crossed the pass by night and debouched into western Boeotia at Amphissa. Pressing on to Naupactus, he opened up his communications with the sea. He was now on the rear of, if at a distance from, the defenders of the eastern pass. Thereupon they fell back from Parapotamii—not only because if they stayed their line of retreat might be cut, but also because there was no apparent value in staying. Philip, however, once more diverged from the line of expectation, and made yet another indirect approach. For, instead of pressing eastwards from Amphissa through hilly country which would have aided resistance, he switched his army back through Cytinium and Elatea, turned southward through the now unguarded pass of Parapotamii, and descended upon the enemy's army at Chaeronea. This manœuvre went far towards assuring his victory in the battle that followed; its effect was completed by his tactics. He lured the Athenians out of position—by giving way before them, and then, when they had pressed forward on to lower ground, breaking their line with a counterstroke. As the result of Chaeronea, the Macedonian supremacy was established in Greece.

Fate cut off Philip before he could extend his conquests to Asia, and it was left to his son to conduct



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the campaign that he had intended. Alexander had as legacy not only a plan and a model instrument—the army which Philip had developed¹—but a conception of grand strategy. Another heirloom of decided material value was the possession of the Dardanelles bridge-heads, seized under Philip's direction in 336 B.C. If we study a chart of Alexander's advance we see that it was a series of acute zig-zags. A study of its history shows that there were deeper reasons than the logistical for this indirectness. Indeed, his logistical strategy is direct and devoid of subtlety. The cause would appear to be, first, that in the youthful Alexander, bred to kingship and triumph, there was more of the Homeric hero than in the other great captains of history²; and, still more perhaps, that he had such justifiable confidence in the superiority of his instrument and his own battle-handling of it that he felt no need to dislocate preparatorily his adversaries' strategic balance. His lessons for posterity lie at the two poles—war-policy and tactics.

Starting from the eastern shore of the Dardanelles, he first moved southward and defeated the Persian covering force at the Granicus river. Here the enemy at least had the shrewdness to appreciate that if they

¹ Philip had spent three years of his youth as a hostage in Thebes when Epaminondas was at his peak—and the impressions Philip then received can be clearly traced in the subsequent tactics of the Macedonian army.

² At the start of his invasion of Asia, Alexander romantically re-enacted the Homeric story of the expedition against Troy. While his army was waiting to cross the Dardanelles, Alexander himself with a picked detachment landed near Ilium, at the spot where the Greeks were supposed to have moored their ships in the Trojan War, and then advanced to the site of the original city, where he offered sacrifice in the temple of Athena, staged a mimic battle, and delivered an oration at the reputed burial-mound of Achilles, his traditional ancestor. After these symbolical performances, he rejoined his army, to conduct the real campaign.

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could concentrate against, and kill, the over-bold Alexander himself, they would paralyse the invasion at its birth. They failed but narrowly in this purpose.

Alexander next moved south on Sardis, the political and economic key to Lydia, and thence west to Ephesus, restoring to these Greek towns their former democratic government and rights, as a means to secure his own rear in the most economical way.

He had now returned to the Aegean coast, and he pursued his way first south and then eastward along it through Caria, Lycia, and Pamphylia. In this approach his object was to dislocate the Persian command of the sea—by depriving the Persian fleet of freedom to move, through depriving it of its bases. At the same time, by freeing these sea-ports, he deprived the enemy fleet of much of its man-power, which was recruited from them.

Beyond Pamphylia, the coastline of the rest of Asia Minor was practically barren of ports. Hence he now turned north again to Phrygia, and eastwards as far as Ancyra (modern Ankara)—consolidating his hold on, and securing his rear in, central Asia Minor. This done, he turned south through the Cilician 'Gates' on the direct route towards Syria, where Darius III was concentrating to oppose him. Here, through the failure of his intelligence service, and his own assumption that the Persians would await him in the plains, Alexander was strategically out-manœuvred. While Alexander made a direct approach, Darius made an indirect, and, moving up the higher reaches of the Euphrates, came through the Amanic Gates on Alexander's rear. The latter, who had been so careful to secure his chain of bases, now found himself cut off from them. But, turning back, he extricated himself at the battle of Issus by the superiority of his tactics and his tactical

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instrument. And no great captain used the indirect approach more in his tactics.

Thereafter he again took an indirect route, down the coast of Syria instead of pressing on to Babylon, the heart of the Persian power. Grand strategy clearly dictated his course. For if he had dislocated, he had not yet destroyed the Persian command of the sea; so long as it existed it might be the means of indirect approach to his own rear. And Greece, especially Athens, was unpleasantly restive. His advance into Phoenicia disrupted the Persian fleet, for what remained was mainly Phoenician. Most of it came over to him, and the Tyrian portion fell with the fall of Tyre. Even then he again moved southward, into Egypt, a move more difficult to explain on naval ground, except as an additional precaution. It is more intelligible, however, in the light of his political purpose of occupying the Persian empire and consolidating his own in substitution. For this purpose Egypt was an immense economic asset.

At last he marched northwards again to Aleppo, then turned eastwards and made a direct approach against the new army which Darius had assembled near Mosul. Once again, at Gaugamela, Alexander and his army showed their complete superiority to an army that was the least serious of the obstacles in Alexander's path to his grand strategic goal. The occupation of Babylon followed.

Alexander's succeeding campaigns, until he reached the borders of India, were militarily a 'mopping up' of the Persian empire, if politically the consolidation of his own. But he forced the Uxian defile and the Persian 'Gates' by an indirect approach, and when he was confronted on the Hydaspes by Porus, he produced a masterpiece of indirectness which showed the ripening of his own strategical powers. By laying in stores of

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corn, and by distributing his army widely along the western bank, he mystified his opponent as to his intentions. Repeated noisy marches and counter-marches of Alexander's cavalry first kept Porus on tenterhooks, and then, through repetition, dulled his reaction—as by a sleeping draught. Having thus fixed Porus to a definite and static position, Alexander left the bulk of his army opposite it, and himself with a picked force made a night crossing eighteen miles upstream. By the surprise of this indirect approach he dislocated the mental and moral equilibrium of Porus, as well as the moral and physical equilibrium of his army. In the ensuing battle, Alexander, with a fraction of his own army, was enabled to defeat almost the whole of his enemy's. If this preliminary dislocation had not occurred there would have been no justification, either in theory or in fact, for Alexander's exposure of an isolated fraction to the risk of defeat in detail.

In the long wars of the 'Successors' which followed Alexander's death and rent his empire asunder, there are numerous examples of the indirect approach. His generals were abler men than Napoleon's marshals, and their experience had led them to grasp the deeper meaning of economy of force. While many of their operations are worth study, the present analysis is restricted to the decisive campaigns of ancient history, and in these wars of the Diadochi only the last, in 301 B.C., can be definitely so termed. The claim of this to decisiveness can hardly be challenged, for in the measured words of the *Cambridge Ancient History*, by its issue 'the struggle between the central power and the dynasts was ended' and 'the dismemberment of the Graeco-Macedonian world became inevitable'.

By 302 B.C., Antigonus, who claimed to stand in Alexander's place, was at last within reach of his goal of securing the empire for himself. Expanding from

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his original Satrapy of Phrygia, he had won control of Asia from the Aegean to the Euphrates. Opposing him, Seleucus had held on to Babylon with difficulty; Ptolemy was left only with Egypt; Lysimachus was more secure in Thrace; but Cassander, the most formidable of the rival generals and the keystone of the resistance to Antigonus's almost realized dream, had been driven from Greece by Antigonus's son Demetrius—who in many characteristics was a second Alexander. Called upon for unconditional surrender, Cassander replied by a stroke of strategic genius. The plan was arranged at a conference with Lysimachus, and Ptolemy's aid towards it was sought, while he in turn got in touch with Seleucus by sending messengers on camels across the Arabian desert.

Cassander kept only some 31,000 men to face Demetrius's invasion of Thessaly—with 57,000—and lent the rest of his army to Lysimachus. The latter crossed the Dardanelles eastwards, while Seleucus moved westwards towards Asia Minor, his army including 500 war elephants obtained from India. Ptolemy moved northwards into Syria, but on receiving a false report of Lysimachus's defeat, returned to Egypt. Nevertheless, the convergent advance from both sides on the heart of his empire constrained Antigonus to recall Demetrius urgently from Thessaly, where Cassander had succeeded in keeping him at bay until the indirect move against his strategic rear in Asia Minor called him off—as Scipio's fundamentally similar move later forced Hannibal's return to Africa. And at the battle of Ipsus, in Phrygia, Cassander's strategy was consummated by his partners' decisive tactical victory, which ended in the death of Antigonus and the flight of Demetrius. In this battle, it is worth remark, the war elephants were the decisive instrument, and, fittingly, the tactics of the victors were

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essentially indirect. After their cavalry had disappeared from the scene with Demetrius in hot pursuit, their elephants cut off his return. Even then, instead of assaulting Antigonus's infantry, Lysimachus demoralized them by threat of attack and arrow fire—until they began to melt. Then Seleucus struck, with a thrust at the point where Antigonus himself stood.

When the campaign had opened the scales were heavily weighted and steeply tilted on the side of Antigonus. Rarely has the balance of fortune so dramatically changed. It would seem clear that Antigonus's balance had been upset by the indirect approach which Cassander planned. This dislocated the mental equilibrium of Antigonus, the moral equilibrium of his troops and his subjects, and the physical equilibrium of his military dispositions.

Chapter III

ROMAN WARS—HANNIBAL, SCIPIO, AND CAESAR

The next conflict decisive in its results, and in effect on European history, was the struggle between Rome and Carthage—in which the Hannibalic, or Second Punic, War was the determining period. This falls into a series of phases or campaigns, each decisive in turning the current of the war into a fresh course.

The first phase opens with Hannibal's advance from Spain towards the Alps and Italy, and the natural closing-point appears to be the annihilating victory of Trasimene, which left Rome unshielded, save by her walls and garrison, to Hannibal's immediate approach—had he chosen to make it.

The reason commonly assigned for Hannibal's initial choice of the circuitous and arduous land route in preference to the direct sea route is that of Rome's supposed 'command of the sea'. But it is absurd to apply the modern interpretation of this phrase to an era when ships were so primitive, and their ability to intercept a foe at sea so uncertain. Even to-day such 'command' has limitations. But beyond this reflection there is a significant sidelight in a passage of Polybius (iii. 97) when, speaking of the very time of Trasimene,

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he refers to the Roman Senate's anxiety lest the Carthaginians 'should obtain a more complete mastery of the sea'. Even in the closing stage of the war, after the Romans had won repeated victories at sea, deprived the Carthaginian fleet of all its Spanish bases, and were established in Africa, they were powerless to prevent Mago landing an expeditionary force on the Genoese Riviera, or Hannibal sailing tranquilly back to Africa. It seems more probable that Hannibal's indirect and overland route of invasion was due to the aim of rallying the Celts of Northern Italy against Rome.

Next, we should note the indirectness even of this land march, and the advantage gained thereby. The Romans had dispatched the consul, Publius Scipio (father of Africanus), to Marseilles, with the object of barring Hannibal's path at the Rhône. Hannibal, however, not only crossed this formidable river unexpectedly high up, but then turned still further northward—to take the more devious and difficult route by the Isère valley, instead of the straighter but more easily barred routes near the Riviera. When the elder Scipio arrived at the crossing three days later he was 'astonished to find the enemy gone; for he had persuaded himself that they would never venture to take this (northerly) route into Italy' (Polybius.). By prompt decision and speedy movement, leaving part of his army behind, he got back to Italy by sea in time to meet Hannibal on the plains of Lombardy. But here Hannibal had the advantage of suitable ground for his superior cavalry. The victories of the Ticinus and the Trebia were the sequel, and their moral effect brought Hannibal recruits and supplies 'in great abundance'.

Master of the north of Italy, Hannibal wintered there. The following spring, anticipating Hannibal's continued advance, the new consuls took their armies,

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the one to Ariminum (Rimini) on the Adriatic, the other to Arretium (Arezzo) in Etruria—thereby commanding the eastern and western routes respectively by which Hannibal could advance towards Rome. Hannibal decided on the Etrurian route, but instead of advancing by one of the normal roads, he made thorough inquiries, through which ‘he ascertained that the other roads leading into Etruria were long and well known to the enemy, but that one which led through the marshes was short, and would bring them upon Flaminius by surprise. This was what suited his peculiar genius, and he therefore decided to take this route. But when the report was spread in his army that the commander was going to lead them through the marshes, every soldier felt alarmed . . .’ (Polybius).

Normal soldiers always prefer the known to the unknown; Hannibal was an abnormal general and hence, like other great captains, chose to face the most hazardous *conditions* rather than the certainty of meeting his opponents in a position of their own choosing.

For four days and three nights Hannibal’s army marched ‘through a route which was under water’, suffering terribly from fatigue and enforced want of sleep, while losing many men and more horses. But on emerging he found the Roman army still passively encamped at Arretium. Hannibal attempted no direct attack. Instead, as Polybius tells us, ‘he calculated that, if he passed the camp and made a descent into the district beyond, Flaminius—partly for fear of popular reproach and partly from personal irritation—would be unable to endure watching passively the devastation of the country but would spontaneously follow him . . . and give him opportunities for attack’. Here we have a mental application of the manœuvre against the enemy’s rear, based on searching inquiries

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about his opponent's character. And it was followed by a physical execution. Pressing along the road to Rome, Hannibal laid and achieved the greatest ambush in history. In the misty dawn of the following morning, the Roman army, in hot pursuit along the hill-bordered skirts of the Lake of Trasimene, was caught by surprise in a trap front and rear—and annihilated. Readers of history all remember the victory, but are apt to overlook the mental thrust that made it possible. But Polybius, although lacking our advantage of two thousand more years' experience of warfare, drew the correct moral—'for as a ship, if you deprive it of its steersman, falls with all its crew into the hands of the enemy; so, with an army in war, if you outwit or out-manceuvre its general, the whole will often fall into your hands'.

We now enter the second phase of the war. Why, after Trasimene, Hannibal did not march on Rome is a mystery of history—and all solutions are but speculation. Lack of an adequate siege-train is an obvious reason, but may not be the complete explanation. All we know for certain is that the succeeding years were spent by Hannibal in trying to break Rome's hold on her Italian allies and to weld them into a coalition against her. Victories were merely a moral impetus towards this end. The tactical advantage would always be assured if he could obtain battle under conditions favourable for his superior cavalry.

This second phase opens with a Roman, if strangely un-Roman, form of the indirect approach, a form which has given to history and to subsequent imitations, many of them bad, the generic title 'Fabian strategy'—although, strictly, it was a war-policy, not a strategy. The war policy of Fabius was not merely an evasion of battle to gain time, but calculated for its effect on the moral of the enemy and, still more, for

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its effect on their potential allies. Fabius realized Hannibal's military superiority too well to risk a military decision. While seeking to avoid this, he aimed by military pin-pricks to wear down the invaders' endurance and, coincidentally, prevent their strength being recruited from the Italian cities or their Carthaginian base. The key condition of the strategy by which this war policy was carried out was that the Roman army should keep always to the hills, so as to nullify Hannibal's decisive superiority in cavalry. Thus this phase becomes a mental tug-of-war between the Hannibalic and the Fabian forms of strategy.

Hovering in the enemy's neighbourhood, cutting off stragglers and foraging parties, preventing him from gaining any permanent base, Fabius remained an elusive shadow on the horizon, dimming the glamour of Hannibal's triumphal progress. Thus Fabius, by his immunity from defeat, thwarted the effect of Hannibal's previous victories upon the minds of Rome's Italian allies and checked them from changing sides. This guerilla type of campaign also revived the spirit of the Roman troops while depressing the Carthaginians who, having ventured so far from home, were the more conscious of the necessity of gaining an early decision.

But attrition is a two-edged weapon and, even when skilfully wielded, puts a strain on the users. It is especially trying to the mass of the people, eager to see a quick finish—and always inclined to assume that this can only mean the enemy's finish. The more the Roman people recovered from the shock of Hannibal's victory, the more they began to question the wisdom of the Fabian treatment which had given them a chance to recover. And their smouldering doubts were naturally fanned by the ambitious hotheads in the army, who were ever ready to criticize Fabius for his

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‘cowardly and unenterprising spirit’. This led to the unprecedented step of appointing Minucius, who was both Fabius’s chief subordinate and his chief critic, as co-dictator. Whereupon Hannibal seized the opportunity to draw Minucius into a trap from which he was barely rescued by Fabius’s speedy intervention.

For a time this quieted criticism of Fabius. But when his six months’ appointment expired, neither he nor his policy were popular enough to secure an extension. And at the consular elections, one of the two chosen was the impetuous and ignorant Varro, who had earlier engineered Minucius’s appointment. Moreover, the Senate passed a resolution that they should give battle to Hannibal. There was ground for this decision in the devastation that Italy was suffering, and it was backed up by the practical step of raising the largest army, eight legions, which Rome had ever placed in the field. But the Romans were to pay dearly for electing a leader whose offensive spirit was not balanced by judgement.

His abler colleague, Paullus, wished to wait and manœuvre for a favourable opportunity, but such caution did not accord with Varro’s ideas—‘So much had been said about men taking the field not to set sentinels, but to use their swords.’ Varro’s conception, and public promise, was to attack the enemy wherever and whenever they found him. As a result, he took the first opportunity of offering battle to Hannibal—in the plain at Cannae. When Paullus argued that they should try to draw Hannibal into country more suitable for infantry action, Varro used his alternate day of command to advance into close contact. When Paullus kept the troops in their entrenched camp next day, calculating that shortage of supplies would soon force Hannibal to move away, Varro ‘became more than ever inflamed with the desire for

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fighting'—according to Polybius's account. And that feeling was shared by most of the troops, who chafed at the delay. 'For there is nothing more intolerable to mankind than suspense; when a thing is once decided, men can but endure whatever out of the catalogue of evils it is their misfortune to undergo.'

Next morning, Varro moved the Roman army out of camp to provide the kind of battle which Hannibal desired. As usual, the infantry of both sides were posted in the centre, and the cavalry on the flanks—but Hannibal's detailed disposition was unconventional. For he pushed forward the Gauls and Spaniards, who formed the centre of the infantry line, while holding back his African foot, posted at each end of the line. Thus the Gauls and Spaniards formed a natural magnet for the Roman infantry, and were, as intended, forced back—so that what had been a line bulging outwards became a line sagging inwards. The Roman legionaries, flushed with their apparent success, crowded into the opening—where the press grew ever denser, until they could scarcely use their weapons. While they imagined that they were breaking the Carthaginian front, they were actually pushing themselves into a Carthaginian sack. For at this juncture Hannibal's African veterans wheeled inwards from both sides, and automatically enveloped the thickly packed Romans.

Meanwhile, Hannibal's heavy cavalry on the left wing had broken through the opposing cavalry on that flank and, sweeping round the Romans' rear, dispersed their cavalry on the other flank—hitherto held in play by the elusive Numidian horse. Leaving the pursuit to the Numidians, the heavy cavalry delivered the final stroke by bursting into the rear of the Roman infantry, already surrounded on three sides and too tightly jammed to offer effective resistance. Thence-

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forward, the battle was merely a massacre. According to Polybius, out of the 76,000 men of the Roman army, 70,000 fell on the field of battle. Among them was Paullus—but the offensively-inspired Varro was one of the few who successfully escaped. The disaster broke up the Italian confederation for a time, but failed to break Rome itself—where Fabius helped to rally the people for sustained resistance.

Rome's inflexible resolution henceforward in pursuing the strategy of evasion at any sacrifice combined with the conditions of the age, with Hannibal's own comparative weakness, and with his situation as the invader—of a primitively organized land—to thwart his aim. (When Scipio later retorted with a counter-invasion of Africa he found the more highly developed economic structure of Carthage an aid to his purpose.)

The second phase of the war closed with yet another type of the strategic indirect approach, when the consul, Nero, bluffed the arch-bluffer and, slipping away from before him, concentrated by forced marches against Hasdrubal, who had just arrived with his army in Northern Italy. After destroying him at the Metaurus, and with him Hannibal's hope of ultimate victory, Nero was back in his camp opposite Hannibal before the latter realized that it had been empty. Thereafter stalemate reigned in Italy—the third phase. During five years, Hannibal stood at bay in southern Italy, and a succession of Roman generals retired licking their wounds from their too direct approaches to the lion's lair.

Meantime Publius Scipio the younger had been sent to Spain on a desperate venture to redeem the disaster which had there overtaken his dead father and uncle, and to maintain, if possible, Rome's slender foothold in the north-east corner of Spain—against the victorious and greatly superior Carthaginian forces in

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that country. By swiftness of movement, superior tactics, and skilful diplomacy he converted this defensive object into an offensive, if indirect, thrust at Carthage and at Hannibal. For Spain was Hannibal's real strategic base; there he had trained his armies, and thither he looked for reinforcements. By a masterly combination of surprise and timing, Scipio had first deprived the Carthaginian armies of Cartagena, their main base in Spain, as a prelude to depriving them of their allies and overthrowing their armies.

Then, elected consul on his return to Italy, he was ready for the second and decisive indirect approach, long conceived by him, against Hannibal's strategic rear. Fabius, now old and set in mind, voiced the orthodox view, urging that Scipio's duty was to attack Hannibal in Italy. 'Why do you not apply yourself to this, and carry the war in a straightforward manner to the place where Hannibal is, rather than pursue that roundabout course according to which you expect that when you have crossed into Africa, Hannibal will follow you thither?' Scipio gained from the Senate a bare permission to cross into Africa, but was refused leave to levy troops. In consequence he set out on his expedition with but 7,000 volunteers and two disgraced legions—which had been relegated to garrison duty in Sicily in penance for their share in the defeat at Cannae. On landing in Africa, he was met by the only cavalry force which Carthage had immediately available. By a cleverly graduated retreat he lured it into a trap and destroyed it. Thereby he not only gained time to consolidate his position but also created a moral impression which, on the one hand, induced the home authorities to back him more generously and, on the other, shook the hold of Carthage upon her African allies—save for the most powerful, Syphax.

Scipio then tried to secure the port of Utica, to

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serve as his base, but was baffled in an attempt to take it as swiftly as he earlier succeeded in capturing Cartagena. And he was forced to abandon the siege six weeks later when Syphax brought an army of 60,000 men to reinforce the new Carthaginian forces which Hasdrubal was raising. On the approach of the combined armies, much superior to his own in numbers if not in quality, Scipio fell back to a small peninsula, where he fortified a prototype of Wellington's Lines of Torres Vedras. Here he first lulled the commanders of the investing forces into a feeling of security, then distracted their attention by ostensible preparations for a sea-borne thrust against Utica, and finally made a night move upon the enemy's two camps. The demoralizing and disorganizing effect of the surprise was intensified by Scipio's subtle calculation in first launching an attack on Syphax's less orderly camp, where the swarm of huts overflowed the fortified boundaries and were made of inflammable reeds and matting. In the confusion caused by setting fire to these huts the assailants were able to penetrate into the camp itself, while the blaze drew Hasdrubal's Carthaginians to open their own gates and pour out to the rescue, imagining that the conflagration was accidental—for when darkness fell, all had been quiet and normal in the Roman camp, seven miles distant. When the gates of the Carthaginian camp were thus opened, Scipio launched upon them the second stroke of his attack, so gaining entry without the cost of making a breach. Both the hostile armies were dispersed, with the reputed loss of half their total strength.

If we have here outwardly crossed the border-line from strategy into tactics, this 'brilliant' success is in reality a case where strategy not merely paved the way for a victory in battle but executed it—where, indeed, the victory was merely the last act of the strategic

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approach. For an unresisted massacre is not a battle.

After his bloodless triumph Scipio did not at once move on Carthage. Why? If history does not give a direct answer it affords clearer grounds for a deduction than in the case of Hannibal's neglect of Rome after Trasimene and Cannae. Unless there is opportunity and favourable prospect for a quick surprise assault, a siege is the most uneconomic of all operations of war. History, even down to 1914-1918, attests this. And when the enemy has still a field army capable of intervening, a siege is also the most dangerous—for until it is crowned by success the assailant is progressively weakening himself out of proportion to his enemy.

Scipio had to reckon not only with the walls of Carthage but with the return of Hannibal—a contingency which was, indeed, his calculated aim. If he could compel the capitulation of Carthage before Hannibal could return, it would be a great advantage. But it must be by a moral, and hence cheap, dislocation of the city's resistance—not by a heavy physical expenditure of force which might leave him still facing unbreached walls when Hannibal descended on his rear.

Instead of moving on Carthage, Scipio systematically lopped off her supply areas and allies. Above all, the relentless pursuit and overthrow of Syphax was a detachment of force which abundantly justified itself. For by restoring his own ally, Masinissa, to the throne of Numidia he ensured for himself the cavalry resources to counter Hannibal's best weapon.

To reinforce these forms of moral suasion he advanced to Tunis, in sight of Carthage, as 'a most effective means of striking the Carthaginians with terror and dismay'. Coming on top of the other indirect forms of pressure it was sufficient to dislocate the Car-

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thaginians' will to resist, and they sued for peace. But while the terms were awaiting ratification in Rome, the provisional peace was broken when Carthage received news of Hannibal's return, and of his landing at Leptis.

Scipio was thus placed in a difficult and dangerous position. For although he had not weakened himself by an assault on Carthage, he had let Masinissa go back to Numidia, to consolidate his new kingdom—after Carthage had accepted Scipio's peace terms. In such circumstances, an orthodox general would either have taken the offensive, in order to prevent Hannibal reaching Carthage, or have stood on the defensive to await relief. Instead, Scipio took a course that when plotted geographically looks fantastic. For if Hannibal's direct route from Leptis to Carthage be pictured as travelling up the right-hand stroke of an inverted V (Λ), Scipio, leaving a detachment to hold his camp near Carthage, marched away down the left-hand stroke. Truly a most indirect approach! But this route, the Bagradas valley, took him into the heart of Carthage's main source of supplies from the interior. And it also brought him nearer, with every step he marched, to the Numidian reinforcements which Masinissa was bringing in response to an urgent summons.

The move attained its strategic object. The senate of Carthage, aghast at the news that this vital territory was being progressively devastated, sent messengers urging Hannibal to intervene at once and bring Scipio to battle. And Hannibal, although he had told them in answer 'to leave such matters to him', was nevertheless drawn by the compulsion of conditions—created by Scipio—to move west by forced marches to meet Scipio, instead of north to Carthage. Thus Scipio had lured him to an area of his own choosing, where Hannibal lacked the material reinforcement, stable pivot,

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and shelter in case of defeat which he would have enjoyed if the battle had taken place near Carthage.

Scipio had thrust on his enemy the need of seeking battle, and he now exploited this moral advantage to the full. When Masinissa joined him, almost coincidentally with Hannibal's arrival on the scene, Scipio fell back instead of going forward, and thus drew Hannibal to a camping-ground where the Carthaginians suffered from lack of water—and to a battleground in the plain where Scipio's newly acquired advantage in cavalry could have full play. He had taken the first two tricks; on the battlefield of Zama (more correctly, Naraggara) he was enabled to take the rubber by tactically over-trumping Hannibal's former cavalry trump. And when tactical defeat for the first time overtook Hannibal, the consequences of his preliminary strategic defeat also overtook him—for there was no sheltering fortress at hand where the defeated army could rally before the pursuit annihilated it. The bloodless surrender of Carthage followed.

The campaign of Zama made Rome the dominant power in the Mediterranean world. The subsequent extension of that supremacy, and its translation into suzerainty continued without serious check, if not without recurrent threat. Thus 202 B.C. forms a natural conclusion for a survey of the turning points and their military causes, in the history of the ancient world. Ultimately the tide of Roman expansion was to ebb, then that universal empire was to fall to pieces, partly under barbarian pressure but still more from internal decay.

During the period of 'the Decline and Fall', during the centuries when Europe was shedding its old single-coloured skin for a new skin of many colours, there is profit to be got from a study of the military leadership. Sometimes much profit, as in the case of Beli-

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sarius and later generals of the Byzantine empire. But, on the whole, decisiveness is too difficult of definition, turning points too obscure, purposeful strategy too uncertain, and records too unsafe, to provide a basis for scientific deductions.

Before the power of Rome had climbed to its zenith there was, however, one internal war that calls for examination, both because it was the stage for one of the undisputed Great Captains of history and because it vitally affected the course of history. For just as the second Punic War gave the world to Rome, so the Civil War of 50–45 B.C. gave the Roman world to Caesar—and Caesarism. When Caesar crossed the Rubicon in December 50 B.C., his power rested only upon Gaul and Illyricum; Pompey was in control of Italy and the rest of Rome's dominions. Caesar had nine legions, but only one was with him at Ravenna; the remainder were far away in Gaul. Pompey had ten legions in Italy, seven in Spain, and many detachments throughout the empire. But those in Italy had only cadres present with the eagles—and a legion in hand was worth more than two unmobilized. Caesar has been criticized for his rashness in moving south with such a fraction of his army. But time and surprise are the two most vital elements in war. And beyond his appreciation of them, Caesar's strategy was essentially guided by his understanding of Pompey's mind.

From Ravenna there were two routes to Rome. Caesar took the longer and less direct—down the Adriatic coast—but he moved fast. As he passed through this populous district many of the levies being assembled for Pompey joined him instead—a parallel with Napoleon's experience in 1815. Morally dislocated, the Pompeian party quitted Rome and fell back to Capua—while Caesar, interposing between the enemy's advanced force at Corfinium and their main force

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under Pompey round Luceria, secured another bloodless transfer of strength to himself. He then continued his advance south towards Luceria, the snow-ball process likewise continuing; but his advance, which had now become direct, stampeded the enemy into a retreat to the fortified port of Brundisium (Brindisi) on the heel of Italy. And the very vigour with which he followed them up hastened Pompey's decision to retire across the Adriatic to Greece. Thus an excess of directness and a want of art, in the second phase, had robbed Caesar of his chance of ending the war in one campaign, and condemned him to four more years of obstinate warfare all round the Mediterranean basin.

The second campaign now opened. Caesar, instead of following up Pompey directly, turned his attention and forces to Spain. For thus concentrating against the 'junior partner' he has been much criticized. But his estimate of Pompey's inactivity was justified by the event. This time Caesar began the campaign too bluntly, and a direct advance on the enemy's main forces at Ilerda, just across the Pyrenees, enabled them to decline battle. An assault failed, and Caesar only averted disaster by his personal intervention. The morale of his men continued to sink until, just in time, he changed his method of approach.

Instead of making any further attempt to press the siege, Caesar devoted his energies to the creation of an artificial ford which enabled him to command both banks of the river Sicoris, on which Ilerda stood. This threatened tightening of his grip on their sources of supply induced Pompey's lieutenants to retire, while there was time. Caesar allowed them to slip away unpressed, but instead sent his Gallic cavalry to get on their rear and delay their march. Then, rather than assault the bridge held by the enemy's rearguard, he

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took the risk of leading his legions through the deep ford, which was regarded as only traversable by cavalry and, marching in a wide circuit during the night, placed himself across the enemy's line of retreat. Even then he did not attempt battle, but was content to head off each attempt of the enemy to take a fresh line of retreat—using his cavalry to harass and delay them while his legions marched wide. Firmly holding in check the eagerness of his own men for battle, he at the same time encouraged fraternization with the men of the other side, who were growing more and more weary, hungry, and depressed. Finally, when he had shepherded them back in the direction of Ilerda, and forced them to take up a position devoid of water, they capitulated. It was a strategic victory as bloodless for the defeated as for the victor—and the less men slain on the other side, the more potential adherents and recruits for Caesar. Despite the substitution of manœuvre for direct assaults upon his enemy the campaign had cost him only six weeks of his time.

But in his next campaign he changed his strategy—it lasted eight months before victory crowned his arms, and even then was not complete. Instead of advancing into Greece by the indirect land route through Illyricum, Caesar decided on the direct sea route. Thereby he gained time initially but lost it ultimately. Pompey had originally a large fleet, Caesar none—and although he had ordered the construction or collection of ships on a large scale, only part were available. Rather than wait, Caesar sailed from Brindisi with barely half his assembled force. On landing at Palaeste he headed up the coast for the important seaport of Dyrrachium (Durazzo), but Pompey just reached there first. Fortunately for Caesar, Pompey was as slow as ever, and missed the chance of using his superior strength before Antony, with the other half of Caesar's

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army, could evade the opposing fleet and join him. And even when Antony landed on the other side of Dyrrachium, Pompey, though centrally placed, failed to prevent Caesar and Antony effecting a junction at Tirana. Pompey fell back, followed by his opponent, who offered battle in vain. Thereafter the two armies lay facing each other on the south bank of the river Genusus, which itself was south of Dyrrachium.

The deadlock was broken by an indirect approach. By a long and difficult circuit of some forty-five miles through the hills, Caesar succeeded in placing himself between Dyrrachium and Pompey before the latter, who had only a straight twenty-five miles to cover, awoke to the danger and hurried back to save his base. But Caesar did not press his advantage; and as Pompey had the sea for supplies there was no inducement to a man of his temperament to take the lead in attack. Caesar then took the original but singularly profitless course of constructing extensive lines of investment round an army which was not only stronger than his own, but could supply itself easily, or move away, by sea whenever it wished.

Even Pompey the passive could not forego the opportunity of striking at weak points of such a thin line, and his success led Caesar into an attempt to redeem it by a concentrated counter-attack which failed disastrously. Only Pompey's inertia saved Caesar's demoralized troops from dissolution.

Caesar's men clamoured to be led afresh against the enemy, but Caesar had learnt his lesson, and after making good his retreat he reverted to a strategy of indirect approach. Pompey had a better opportunity to apply it at this juncture—by recrossing the Adriatic and regaining control of Italy, where his path would have been smoothed by the moral impression of Caesar's defeat. Caesar, however, showed more ap-

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preciation of the possibilities of this *westward* move—as a danger to himself. He moved rapidly *eastward* against Pompey's lieutenant, Scipio Nasica, who was in Macedonia. Pompey, thereby mentally dominated, was drawn to follow Caesar; taking a different route, he hurried to Scipio's support. Caesar arrived first, but rather than throw his troops against fortifications, he allowed Pompey to come up. This seeming loss of an opportunity on Caesar's part may also have been due to his view that, after Dyrrachium, a strong inducement would be needed to make Pompey give battle in the open. If so, that idea was correct, for although Pompey had a two to one superiority in numbers, he took the risk of offering battle only under the persuasion of his lieutenants. Just as Caesar had prepared a series of manœuvres to create the opportunity, Pompey advanced and gave it to him—at Pharsalus. For Caesar's interest, the battle was undoubtedly premature—and the closeness of the issue was the measure of its prematurity. Caesar's indirect approach had been made to restore the strategic balance, and a further one was needed to upset Pompey's balance.

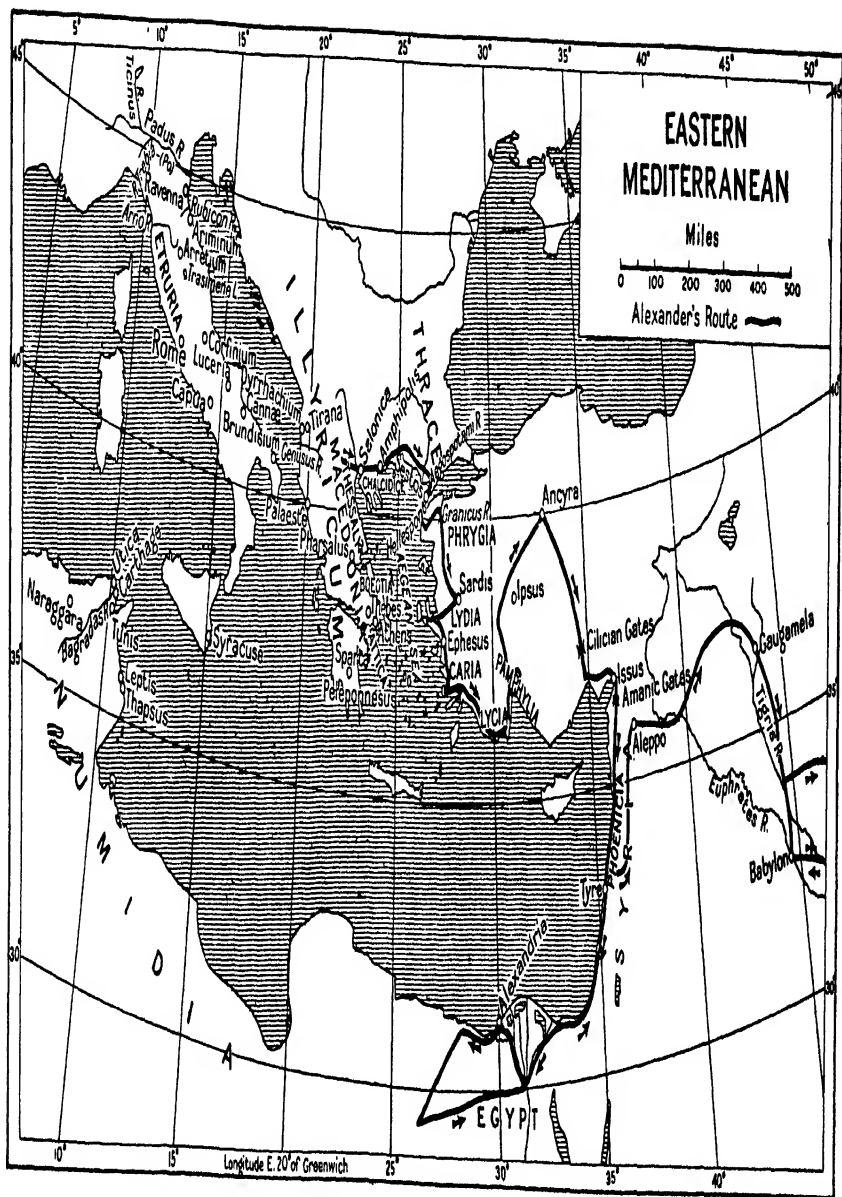
After the victory of Pharsalus, Caesar chased Pompey across the Dardanelles, through Asia Minor, and thence across the Mediterranean to Alexandria—where Ptolemy assassinated him, thus saving Caesar much trouble. But Caesar forfeited the advantage by intervening in the quarrel between Ptolemy and his sister Cleopatra over the Egyptian succession, thereby wasting eight months in an unnecessary diversion of effort. It would seem that Caesar's recurrent and deep-rooted fault was his concentration in pursuing the objective immediately in front of his eyes to the neglect of his wider object. Strategically he was an alternating Jekyll and Hyde.

The interval allowed the Pompeian forces to rally,

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and to obtain a new lease of life in Africa and Spain. In Africa Caesar's difficulties were increased by the direct action already adopted by his lieutenant, Curio. After landing, and winning an initial victory, Curio had let himself be lured into a trap by King Juba, ally of the Pompeian party, and there exterminated. Caesar opened his African campaign with equal directness, impetuosity, and insufficiency of force as in his Greek campaign, ran his head into a noose, and was extricated from it by his usual combination of luck and tactical skill. After this he settled down in a fortified camp near Ruspina to await the arrival of his other legions, refusing all temptation to battle. The Jekyll of blood-saving manœuvre then became uppermost in Caesar—and for several months, even after his reinforcements arrived, he pursued a strategy of extreme but narrow indirectness of approach, manœuvring repeatedly to inflict a series of pin-pricks whose wearing and depressing effect on the enemy's morale was shown in the swelling stream of desertions. At last, by a somewhat wider indirect approach to the enemy's important base at Thapsus, he created a favourable opportunity for battle. And his troops—taking the bit in their teeth—launched the attack and won the battle without higher direction.

In the Spanish campaign which followed, and closed the war, Caesar from the outset strove to avoid loss of life and manœuvred ceaselessly within narrow limits to work his opponents into a position where he could make a battle cast with the dice loaded for him. He gained such an advantage at Munda, and gained the victory, but the closeness of the struggle, and the heavy cost of life therein incurred, point the distinction between economy of force and mere thriftiness of force. Caesar's indirectness of approach appears narrow and wanting in surprise. In each of his campaigns



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he strained the enemy's morale, but did not dislocate it. And the reason would appear to be that he was more concerned to aim at the mind of the enemy's troops than at the mind of their command. If his campaigns serve to bring out the distinction between the two qualities of indirect approach—to the opposing forces and to the opposing command—they also bring out most forcibly the difference between a direct and an indirect approach. For Caesar met failure each time he relied on the direct, and retrieved it each time he resorted to the indirect.

Chapter IV

BYZANTINE WARS—BELISARIUS AND NARSES

After Caesar's crowning victory at Munda, he was granted 'perpetual dictatorship' of Rome, and the Roman world. This decisive step, a contradiction in terms, spelt the sterilization of the constitution. Thereby it paved the way for the conversion of the Republic into the Empire—which carried within its system the germs of its own decay. The process, however, was gradual—if, on a long view, progressive. Five hundred years passed between Caesar's triumph and the final collapse of Rome. And even then a 'Roman Empire' continued for another thousand years in a different location. This was due, first, to Constantine the Great's transfer of the capital from Rome to Byzantium (Constantinople), in 330; second, to the definite division, in 364, of the Roman world into an Eastern and a Western Empire. The former kept its strength better than the latter, which increasingly crumbled under barbarian attacks and barbarian permeation until, near the end of the fifth century A.D., the establishment of an independent kingdom of Italy—following that of similar kingdoms in Gaul, Spain, and Africa—was accompanied by the deposition of the nominal Emperor of the West.

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In the middle of the sixth century there was, however, a period when the Roman dominion was revived in the West—from the East. During Justinian's reign in Constantinople, his generals reconquered Africa, Italy, and southern Spain. That achievement, associated mainly with the name of Belisarius, is the more remarkable because of two features—first, the extraordinarily slender resources with which Belisarius undertook these far-reaching campaigns; second, his consistent use of the tactical defensive. There is no parallel in history for such a series of conquests by abstention from attack! And it may seem all the more strange since they were carried out by an army that was based on the mobile arm—and mainly composed of cavalry. Belisarius had no lack of audacity, but his tactics were to allow—or tempt—the other side to do the attacking. If that choice was, in part, imposed on him by his numerical weakness, it was also a matter of subtle calculation, both tactical and psychological.

His army bore little resemblance to the classical pattern of the legionary army—it was closer to the medieval form, but more highly developed. To a soldier of Caesar's time it would have been unrecognizable as a Roman army, though a soldier who had served with Scipio in Africa might have found the trend of its evolution less surprising. Between Scipio and Caesar, while Rome itself was changing from a city-state into an Empire, the army had been transformed from a short-service citizen force to a long-service professional force. But military organization had not fulfilled the promise of cavalry predominance that was foreshadowed at Zama. The infantry were the staple of the Imperial Roman Army, and the cavalry (though the breed of horses had greatly improved in size and speed) had become as subsidiary as they had been in the earlier stages of the war

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against Hannibal. As the need for greater mobility in frontier defence became more evident, the proportion of the cavalry was gradually increased, but it was not until the legions were overwhelmed at Adrianople, in 378, by the cavalry of the Goths, that the Roman armies came to be reorganized in accordance with this lesson. And in the generations that followed, the pendulum swung to the other extreme. Under Theodosius, the expansion of the mobile arm was hastened by enlisting vast numbers of barbarian horsemen. Later, the recruiting balance was to some extent corrected, while the new type of organization was systematized. By the time of Justinian and Belisarius, the principal arm was formed by the heavy cavalry, who were armed with bow as well as lance, and clad in armour. The underlying idea was evidently to combine the value of mobile fire-power and of mobile shock-power—as separately demonstrated by the Hun or Persian horse-archer and the Gothic lancer—in a single disciplined fighting man. These heavy cavalry were supplemented by lightly equipped horse-archers—a combination which, both in form and tactics, foreshadowed that of modern light and heavy (or medium) tanks. The infantry likewise were of light and heavy types, but the latter, with their heavy spears and close-locked formation, merely served as a stable pivot round which the cavalry could manœuvre in battle.

In the early part of the sixth century the East-Roman Empire was in a precarious situation. Its forces suffered a number of humiliating defeats on the Persian frontier, and its whole position in Asia Minor seemed in danger. For a time pressure was relieved by a Hunnish invasion of Persia from the north, but war broke out afresh on the frontier about 525—though in a rather desultory way. It was here that Belisarius first

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won distinction, by his conduct of several cavalry raids into Persian Armenia, and later by a spirited counter-attack after the Persians had captured a frontier castle. The contrast with the poor performance of other leaders led Justinian to appoint him Commander-in-Chief of the forces in the East—when he was well under thirty.

In 530, a Persian army of some 40,000 men advanced upon the fortress of Daras. To meet them Belisarius had a force of barely half their strength, mostly composed of raw recruits who had recently arrived. Rather than stand a siege, he decided to risk a battle, though on a position he had carefully prepared for defensive-offensive tactics—he could count on the Persians' contempt for the Byzantines, as well as their superiority in numbers, to make them take the lead in attack. A wide and deep ditch was dug in front of Daras, but near enough to the walls to allow the defenders of the ditch to be supported by overhead fire from the battlements. Here Belisarius placed his less reliable infantry. A cross-trench ran forward at right angles from each end, and from the ends of these projecting trenches another straight one stretched outwards to the hills on either side of the valley. Along these flanking extensions, which had wide passages at intervals, bodies of heavy cavalry were posted ready for counter-attack. The Hunnish light cavalry were posted at the two inner corners so that, if the heavy cavalry on the wings were driven back, they might relieve the pressure by making a harassing sally on to the attacker's rear.

The Persians, on arrival, were baffled by these dispositions, and spent the first day in exploratory skirmishing. Next morning, Belisarius sent a letter to the Persian commander suggesting that the points in dispute could be settled better by mutual discussion than

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by fighting. He wrote—'The first blessing is peace, as is agreed by all men who have even a small share of reason. . . . The best general, therefore, is that one which is able to bring about peace from war.' These were remarkable words to come from a soldier so young on the eve of his first great victory. But the Persian commander replied that the promises of Romans could never be trusted. In his mind, Belisarius's message and his defensive attitude behind a trench were merely signs of fear. So the attack was launched. The Persians were careful not to push into the obvious trap in the centre—but their care played into the hands of Belisarius. For it meant not only that their effort was split but that the fighting was confined to the cavalry on the wings—to the arm in which Belisarius was least outnumbered and on which he could best rely. At the same time, his infantry were able to contribute by their archery fire. The Byzantine bow outranged the Persian, and the Persian armour was not proof against the Byzantine arrow as the Byzantine was against the Persian.

Against his left wing the Persian cavalry at first made progress, but then a small cavalry detachment which had been hidden behind a hill on the flank suddenly charged them in rear. This unexpected stroke, coupled with the appearance of the Hunnish light cavalry on their other flank, caused them to retreat. Then, on the other flank, the Persian cavalry pressed still deeper, up to the walls of the city, only to produce a gap between their advancing wing and their static centre—a gap into which Belisarius threw all his available cavalry. This counterstroke at the weakened hinge of the Persian line first drove the Persian cavalry wing off the battlefield into a divergent line of flight, and then turned on the exposed flank of the Persian infantry in the centre. The battle ended in the decisive

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defeat of the Persians—the first they had suffered at Byzantine hands for several generations.

After some further reverses the Persian King began to discuss terms of peace with Justinian's envoy. The negotiations were still in progress when the King of the Saracens, an ally of the Persians, suggested a new plan of campaign—for an indirect stroke at the Byzantine power. He argued that, instead of attacking where the Byzantine frontier was strongly held and fortified, there would be more profit in the unexpected. A force composed of the most mobile troops available should move west from the Euphrates across the desert—which had long been considered an impassable barrier—and pounce upon Antioch, the wealthiest city of the East-Roman Empire. This plan was adopted, and was carried far enough to prove that such a desert crossing was practicable with a suitably constituted type of army. Belisarius, however, had made his own forces so mobile, and developed such an efficient system of communication along the frontier, that he was able to hasten down from the north in time to anticipate the enemy's arrival. Having frustrated the threat, he was content to shepherd the invaders back on their homeward course. Such restraint did not please his troops. Aware of their murmurs he tried to point out to them that true victory lay in compelling one's opponent to abandon his purpose, with the least possible loss to oneself. If such a result was obtained, there was no real advantage to be gained by winning a battle—'for why should one rout a fugitive?'—while the attempt would incur a needless risk of defeat, and of thereby laying the Empire open to a more dangerous invasion. To leave a retreating army no way of escape was the surest way to infuse it with the courage of desperation.

Such arguments were too reasonable to satisfy the

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instinctive blood-lust of the soldiery. So to retain his hold on them he gave rein to their desires—and as a result suffered his only defeat, in the process of proving the truth of his warning. But the Persians' victory over their pursuers was purchased at so heavy a price that they were forced to continue their retreat.

After his successful defence of the East, Belisarius was shortly sent on an offensive mission to the West. A century earlier the Vandals, a Germanic people, had ended their southward migration by occupying Roman Africa, and establishing their capital at Carthage. From there they conducted piracy on a great scale and also sent out raiding expeditions to plunder the cities of the Mediterranean seaboard. In 455 they had sacked Rome itself, and subsequently inflicted an overwhelming defeat on a great punitive expedition sent from Constantinople. After some generations, however, luxury and the African sun not merely softened their manners but began to sap their vigour. Then in 531 the Vandal King Hilderic, who had befriended Justinian in his youth, was deposed and imprisoned by a warlike nephew, Gelimer. Justinian thereupon wrote Gelimer asking him to release his uncle, and when this request was rebuffed he decided to send an expeditionary force to Africa under Belisarius. For it, however, he provided only 5,000 cavalry and 10,000 infantry. Though they were picked troops, the odds seemed heavily against them, since the Vandals were reputed to have nearly 100,000 troops.

When the expedition reached Sicily, Belisarius heard some encouraging news—that some of the best of the Vandal forces had been sent to deal with a revolt in Sardinia, then a Vandal possession, and that Gelimer himself was away from Carthage at the moment. Belisarius lost no time in sailing for Africa, and made a successful landing—at a point some nine days' march

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from Carthage: in order to avoid the risk of interception by the superior Vandal fleet. On hearing the news, Gelimer hastily ordered the various contingents of the army to converge on a defile near Ad Decimum, the tenth milestone on the main road to Carthage, where he hoped to surround the invaders. But this plan was dislocated because Belisarius's rapid advance, synchronized with a threat to Carthage by his fleet, caught the Vandal troops in the process of assembling; and a confused series of combats produced such disorder among the Vandal forces that they not only forfeited their opportunity of overwhelming Belisarius, but were dispersed in all directions—thus leaving him a clear path into Carthage. By the time Gelimer had reassembled his troops, and, having recalled his expeditionary force from Sardinia, was ready to take the offensive again, Belisarius had restored the defences of Carthage—which the Vandals had allowed to fall into disrepair.

After waiting several months for the Vandals' expected attempt to eject him, Belisarius concluded from their inactivity that their morale was low, and being on his own side now assured of a secure place of retreat in case of defeat, he decided to venture upon the offensive. Pushing his cavalry ahead, he came upon the Vandals in camp at Tricameron, behind a stream, and started the battle without waiting for his infantry to come up. His idea would seem to have been that, by his manifest weakness of numbers, he might tempt the Vandals into an attack upon him, so that he could counter-attack them as they were crossing the stream. But a 'provocative' attack and simulated retreat failed to draw them further than the brook in pursuit. Thereupon Belisarius took advantage of their caution to push a much larger force across the stream undisturbed, and then, after developing an attack on their

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centre, which fixed their attention, he extended the attack along the whole front.

The Vandals' resistance promptly collapsed, and they took refuge in their stockaded camp. During the night Gelimer himself fled, and after his disappearance his army scattered. This victory, followed up by Belisarius's pursuit and ultimate capture of Gelimer, settled the issue of the war. While the reconquest of Roman Africa had looked a desperate venture in prospect, it had proved astoundingly simple in execution.

That easy triumph encouraged Justinian to attempt the reconquest of Italy and Sicily from the Ostrogoths—and as cheaply, if possible. He sent a small army up the Dalmatian coast. He persuaded the Franks, by a promise of subsidies, to attack the Goths in the north. Under cover of these diversions, he dispatched Belisarius to Sicily with an expeditionary force of 12,000 men, instructing him to give out on arrival there that the force was on its way to Carthage. He was then to occupy the island if he found that it could be easily taken; if not, he was to re-embark without showing his hand. In the event, there was no difficulty. Although the Sicilian cities had been well treated by their conquerors, they readily welcomed Belisarius as their deliverer and protector. The small Gothic garrisons offered no serious resistance to him save at Palermo, which he overcame by a stratagem. In contrast to his success, the attempted invasion of Dalmatia ended in disaster. But as soon as this diversionary advance was renewed by a reinforced Byzantine army, Belisarius crossed the Straits of Messina to begin the invasion of Italy.

Dissension among the Goths, and the negligence of their King, cleared his path through southern Italy, as far as Naples, which was strongly fortified and held by a garrison equal in scale to his own force. Baulked

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for a time, Belisarius eventually found a way of entry through a disused aqueduct; filtering a picked body of men through the narrow tunnel, he combined a rear attack with a frontal escalade at night, and thereby gained control of the city.

The news of its fall caused such an outcry among the Goths as to produce an uprising against their King, and his replacement on the throne by a vigorous general named Vitiges. But Vitiges took the typical military view that it was necessary to finish the Frankish war before concentrating against the new invader. So, after leaving what he considered an adequate garrison in Rome, he marched north to deal with the Franks. But the people of Rome did not share his view, and since the Gothic garrison felt that it was not adequate to defend the city without their help, Belisarius was able to occupy the city without difficulty—the garrison withdrawing as he approached.

Too late, Vitiges repented his decision, and, after buying off the Franks with gold and territory, gathered an army of 150,000 men to recapture Rome. To defend it, Belisarius had a bare 10,000. But in the three months' grace allowed him before the siege began, he had remodelled the city's defences and built up large stocks of food. His method of defence, moreover, was an active one—with frequent well-judged sorties. In these he exploited the advantage which his cavalry enjoyed through being armed with bows, so that they could harass the enemy's cavalry masses while themselves keeping out of reach, or tease the Gothic lancers into blind charges. Though the strain on the scanty defenders was severe, the strength of the besieger was shrinking much faster, especially through sickness. To accelerate the process Belisarius boldly took the risk of sending two detachments from his slender force to seize by surprise the towns of Tivoli and Terracina,

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which dominated the roads by which the besiegers received their supplies. And when reinforcements reached him from home, he extended his mobile raids across to and up the Adriatic coast towards the Goths' main base at Ravenna. Finally, after a year's siege, the Goths abandoned the attempt and withdrew northward—their departure being hastened by the news that a Byzantine raiding force had seized Rimini, a town on their communications disturbingly close to Ravenna. As the rear half of the Gothic army was crowding over the Mulvian bridge, it suffered heavily from a parting stroke which Belisarius launched against it.

While Vitiges retreated north-east towards Ravenna, Belisarius dispatched part of his force, with the fleet, up the west coast to capture Pavia and Milan. He himself, with a mere 3,000 men, rode across to the east coast, where he was joined by a newly landed reinforcement of 7,000, under Narses, the eunuch Court Chamberlain. Thence he hastened to the relief of his endangered detachment at Rimini, which had allowed itself to be shut in by Vitiges. Masking the fortress of Osimo, where the Goths had left a force of 25,000, Belisarius slipped past it and advanced on Rimini, in two columns, while another part of his force went by sea. This advance from three directions was intended to give the Goths an exaggerated impression of his strength. To strengthen the impression, a far-stretched chain of camp-fires were lighted by night. The stratagem succeeded, helped by the fear which Belisarius's name now inspired, and the much larger Gothic army bolted in panic on his approach.

Belisarius now, while keeping watch over Vitiges in Ravenna, planned to clear his communications with Rome by reducing the various fortresses that he had

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slipped past in his rapid advance. With such small numbers as he possessed this was not an easy problem. but his method was to isolate, and concentrate upon particular fortresses while using a far-flung curtain of mobile detachments to keep any potential relieving forces occupied in their own area. Even so, the task took a considerable time, and was the more protracted because some of his generals—who had influence at court to cover their disobedience—were inclined to seek easier and wealthier objectives. Meantime Vitiges was prompted to send embassies to the Franks and the Persians with the tempting suggestion that there was now a great opportunity to turn the tide of Byzantine expansion if they were to join in a concerted attack on the Empire from both sides while its forces were so widely stretched out. The King of the Franks responded by crossing the Alps with a large army.

The first to suffer were their expectant allies. For after the passage of the Po near Pavia had been opened to them by the Goths, who were there faced by a Byzantine force, they attacked both sides impartially, and put them to flight. They then proceeded to eat up the countryside. As their army was almost entirely composed of infantry, their foraging range was narrow, and before long they perished in thousands from the results of the famine they had created. Hamstrung by their own improvident folly they dared not to push on in face of a mobile opponent, and were with little difficulty induced by Belisarius to return home. Belisarius was then able to tighten his grip on Ravenna, and bring about the surrender of Vitiges.

At this point he was recalled by Justinian, ostensibly to deal with the Persians' renewed threat—which in itself was real. It would seem, however, that jealousy was the deeper motive, since it had come to Justinian's

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ears that the Goths had made peace proposals to Belisarius on the basis of recognizing him as Emperor of the West.

While Belisarius was on his way home, Chosroes, the new King of Persia, repeated the cross-desert march that had been frustrated the time before, and succeeded in capturing Antioch. Having despoiled this and other Syrian cities of their wealth, he accepted Justinian's offer of a large annual payment in return for a new peace treaty. Justinian saved his own purse by tearing up the treaty as soon as Chosroes had returned to Persia, and Belisarius to Constantinople. Thus only his subjects were the losers—a result which accorded with the normal experience of warfare.

In the next campaign King Chosroes invaded Colchis, on the Black Sea coast, and captured the Byzantine fortress of Petra. At the same time Belisarius arrived on the eastern frontier. Hearing that Chosroes had gone off on a distant expedition, though it was not yet known where, Belisarius immediately seized the opportunity for a surprise inroad into Persian territory. To extend the effect he dispatched his Arab allies on a raid down the Tigris into Assyria. This well-timed thrust proved to be an unconscious demonstration of the value of the indirect approach. For it threatened the base of the Persian army that had invaded Colchis, and thereby brought Chosroes hurrying back to avert the severance of his communications.

Soon afterwards, Belisarius was recalled to Constantinople—this time because of domestic troubles. During his absence from the East, the Persian King launched an invasion of Palestine with the aim of capturing Jerusalem, now the wealthiest city in the East, since the destruction of Antioch. When the news came, Justinian dispatched Belisarius to the rescue.

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This time Chosroes had brought a very large army, estimated at 200,000 men, and in consequence could not take the desert route; he had to march up the Euphrates into Syria before turning south against Palestine. Thus sure of the route that Chosroes would have to follow, Belisarius concentrated his available troops, few but mobile, at Carchemish, on the upper Euphrates, whence they could threaten the flank of the invader's line of advance near its most vulnerable point—the bend southward. When their presence was reported to Chosroes, he sent an envoy to Belisarius for the nominal purpose of discussing a possible basis of peace and the real purpose of ascertaining the strength and state of Belisarius's force—which, actually, was less than a tenth, perhaps hardly a twentieth, of the scale of the invading army.

Guessing the object of this mission, Belisarius staged a military 'play'. He picked out the best of his own men—including contingents of Goths, Vandals, and Moors who had enlisted in his service after being taken prisoner—and moved out to a point on the Persian envoy's route of approach, so that the latter might imagine that he had been met at what was one of the outposts of a great army. And the soldiers were instructed to spread out over the plain and kept constantly in movement, so as to magnify their apparent numbers. This impression was deepened by Belisarius's air of light-hearted confidence and the care-free behaviour of the troops—as if they had nothing to fear from any possible attack. The envoy's report convinced Chosroes that it was too hazardous to continue his invasion with so formidable a force on the flank of his communications. Then, by further confusing manœuvres of his cavalry along the Euphrates, Belisarius bluffed the Persians into making a hurried retreat across the river, and thence back home. Never

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was an invasion, potentially irresistible, more economically defeated. And this miraculous result was achieved by an indirect approach which, though profiting by a flanking position, was in itself purely psychological.

Belisarius was once again recalled to Constantinople through Justinian's jealous suspicion of his ever-growing fame. Before long, the mismanagement of affairs in Italy so imperilled the Byzantines' hold upon it that Justinian was forced to send Belisarius back there to restore the situation. Parsimony combined with jealousy led the Emperor, however, to allow his general the meagrest resources for the task, which had grown to vast dimensions by the time Belisarius arrived at Ravenna. For the Goths, under a new king, Totila, had gradually rebuilt their strength, regained all the north-west of Italy, and then overrun the south. Naples had fallen to them and Rome was threatened. Belisarius made a daring but unsuccessful attempt to save Rome by sailing round the coast with a detachment, and forcing a passage up the Tiber. Totila then dismantled the fortifications, left a force of about 15,000 to pin down Belisarius's 7,000 on the coast, and marched north with the aim of capturing Ravenna in Belisarius's absence. But Belisarius outmanœuvred his 'warders', and slipped into Rome. It would serve as a bait that no Goth of spirit could refuse. In the three weeks before Totila returned with his army, Belisarius had repaired the fortifications so well, save for replacing the gates, that he was able to repulse two successive heavy attacks. In these the Goths lost so heavily that their confidence waned, and when they made a third attempt later Belisarius delivered a counterstroke that threw them back in confusion. Next day they abandoned the siege and withdrew to Tivoli.

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But despite repeated appeals Justinian only sent reinforcements in dribbles, and thus, instead of being able to attempt the reconquest of the country as a whole, Belisarius was reduced to spending several years in a 'tip and run' campaign among the fortresses, and from port to port. At last, seeing that it was hopeless to expect that Justinian would ever trust him with an adequately strong army, he obtained permission to give up the task and return to Constantinople.

Four years later, repenting of his decision to abandon Italy, Justinian decided to undertake a fresh expedition. Unwilling to put Belisarius in charge, lest he might be creating a rival sovereign, he eventually gave the command to Narses—who had long been a keen theoretical student of war, and who, in the crowning phase of Belisarius's first Italian campaign, had been given a chance to prove his practical skill.

Narses made full use of the greater opportunity now offered him. In the first place, he made it a condition of accepting the offer that he was provided with a really strong and well-equipped force. With this he marched north round the Adriatic shore. His march was assisted by the Goths' belief that his invasion would necessarily come across the sea—since they assumed that the rugged coastal route, with its numerous river-mouths, was too difficult for him to attempt. But by arranging for a large number of boats to keep pace with his overland advance, and using them to form floating bridges, Narses made unexpectedly rapid progress, and reached Ravenna without opposition. Losing no time, he pressed on southward, circling past the various fortresses which barred the way—with the aim of forcing battle on Totila before his forces were fully assembled. Totila held the main pass across the Apennines, but Narses slipped

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over by a side path and came upon Totila at Taginae.

Here Narses had a superiority of force over the Goths, in contrast to Belisarius's constant inferiority in former campaigns. Nevertheless, having drawn his full profit from the strategic offensive, Narses preferred the tactical defensive on meeting Totila. Counting on the instinctive 'offensiveness' of the Goths to make them take the lead in attack, he prepared a trap for them—on lines which foreshadowed the English tactics at Crécy, against the French chivalry, eight hundred years later. His design was based on an awareness of the Goths' justified contempt for the frailty of the Byzantine infantry in face of a cavalry charge. In the centre of his line he placed a large body of dismounted cavalry, to use their lances on foot, so that they might appear to the enemy like a mass of infantry spearmen. On each flank of this central body he placed his foot-archers, pushed well forward in a crescent from which they could enfilade any assault on the centre, with most of his mounted cavalry close in rear of them. Well out to the left, under a hill, he posted a picked force of cavalry to deliver a surprise stroke upon the Goths' rear as soon as they became deeply engaged.

This cleverly baited trap fulfilled its purpose. The Gothic cavalry were launched against the supposedly unreliable infantry in the enemy's centre. In their charge they suffered badly from the converging hail of arrows on their flanks, and were then checked in front by the firm stand of the dismounted lancers—while increasingly galled by the archers who now closed in on their flanks. As for the Gothic infantry, these hesitated to come up in support for fear of being themselves attacked in rear by the horse-archers whom Narses had posted near the flanking hill. After continuing the vain effort for some time, the disheartened

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Gothic cavalry began to fall back, whereupon Narses delivered a decisive counterstroke with his own cavalry, hitherto held in reserve. The defeat of the Goths was so complete that Narses met with little further serious resistance in carrying out the second reconquest of Italy.

The final subjugation of the Goths was accomplished just in time to leave Narses free to deal with a new incursion of the Franks, made in response to the Goths' desperate appeal. This time the Franks pushed much deeper than before—down into Campania. It would seem that Narses, profiting by the experience of their first invasion, wished to give them 'rope to hang themselves'—to avoid battle until their huge strength had dwindled under the rigours of the march and the toll of dysentery. They still numbered 80,000, however, when he offered battle to them at Casilinum. Here he devised a trap that was shrewdly fitted to their characteristic tactics. An army of foot, they attacked in a deep column, relying on weight and momentum. Their weapons were of a close-range type—the spear, the throwing axe, and the sword.

At Casilinum Narses held his centre with spearmen and bowmen, on foot. The charge of the Franks drove them back, but then Narses wheeled in his cavalry wings against their flanks. This halted them, and they promptly faced outwards ready to meet a charge. But he made no attempt to close with them, knowing that their formation was too solid to be broken by shock. Instead, he checked his cavalry just out of range of the Franks' throwing axes, and ordered them to use their bows—raining arrows on a mass that could not retaliate without disjuncting its own close-ranked formation. When, at last, they sought relief by breaking their ranks, and edging away to the rear, he seized the opportunity to charge home. This well-timed stroke shattered them, and scarcely a man escaped.

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At first glance the interest of the campaigns of Belisarius and Narses appears to be tactical rather than strategical, since so many of the movements lead directly to battle and there are fewer examples of calculated manœuvring against the enemy's communications than in the campaigns of other Great Captains. But closer examination modifies this impression. Belisarius had developed a new-style tactical instrument with which he knew that he might count on beating much superior numbers, provided that he could induce his opponents to attack him under conditions that suited his tactics. For that purpose his lack of numbers, when not too marked, was an asset, especially when coupled with an audaciously direct strategic offensive. His strategy was thus more psychological than logistical. He knew how to provoke the barbarian armies of the West into indulging their natural instinct for direct assault; with the more subtle and skilful Persians he was able at first to take advantage of their feeling of superiority to the Byzantines, and later, when they learnt respect for him, he exploited their wariness as a means of outmanœuvring them psychologically.

He was a master of the art of converting his weakness into strength; and the opponent's strength into a weakness. His tactics, too, had the essential characteristic of the indirect approach—that of uncovering and dislocating a joint. When asked privately by friends during his first Italian campaign the grounds of his confidence in tackling such vastly superior forces, he replied that in the first engagements with the Goths he was on the look-out to discover their weaknesses, and had observed that they were unable to bring their numbers concertedly into play. The reason, apart from the embarrassment of excessive bulk, was that while his own cavalry were all good mounted horsemen, the Goths had no practice in this branch; their horsemen

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were trained to use only lances and swords, while their foot-archers were accustomed to move behind and under shelter of the cavalry. Thus the horsemen were ineffective except in close combat, while having no means of defending themselves against a mounted opponent who kept just out of reach and rained arrows upon them; as for their foot-archers, these would never risk being caught in the open by the enemy's cavalry. The effect was that the Gothic cavalry were always trying to get to close quarters, and could be easily galled into an ill-timed charge, whereas the infantry tended to hang back when the shielding cavalry got far ahead—so that combination broke down, while a gap was created into which flank counterstrokes could be driven.

The tactical system and the defensive-offensive strategy which Belisarius developed became the foundation of the Byzantine Empire's successful maintenance of its position, and the Roman tradition, during the centuries that followed—while Western Europe was passing through the Dark Ages. The subsequent elaboration of these methods, and the army's reorganization, can be followed in the two great Byzantine military text-books, the *Strategicon* of the Emperor Maurice and the *Tactica* of Leo. This structure proved strong enough to withstand many-sided barbarian pressure, and even the tidal wave of Mohammedan conquest which submerged the Persian Empire. Although outlying territories were lost, the main bastions of the Byzantine Empire were kept intact, and from the reign of Basil I in the ninth century the lost ground was progressively regained. Under Basil II, early in the eleventh century, the Empire reached the highest point of its power since Justinian, five hundred years before, and stood more securely than it had in his time.

Fifty years later its security was dissipated and its prospects forfeited within the space of a few hours.

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Prolonged immunity from danger had led to ever-increasing cuts in the military budget, and caused the decay as well as the reduction of the army. Then the rising power of the Seljuk Turks under Alp Arslan, from 1063 onwards, brought a belated awakening to the need for rearmament, and in 1068 the general Romanus Diogenes was made emperor—as a step towards coping with the danger. Instead of allowing himself time to train the army up to its former pitch of efficiency, he embarked prematurely on an offensive campaign. Encouraged by initial success on the Euphrates, he led his forces deep into Armenia, and near Manzikert met the main Seljuk army. Impressed by the size of the Byzantine army, Alp Arslan offered to open negotiations for a peace settlement, but Romanus insisted that, prior to any discussions, the Turkish Sultan must evacuate his camp and withdraw—which would have meant a loss of ‘face’ that he could hardly be expected to accept. Following Alp Arslan’s refusal, Romanus launched an attack, and, breaking with the Byzantine military tradition, allowed himself to be drawn on further and further in a vain effort to come to close quarters with an evasive and nimble foe, whose clouds of horse-archers continually harassed his advance. By dusk his troops were exhausted, and their formation became disjointed, when at last he ordered a retirement; the Turks now closed in round his flanks, and under this encircling pressure his army broke up.

The defeat was so disastrously complete that the Turks were soon able to overrun the greater part of Asia Minor. Thus through the folly of a single hot-headed general, whose offensive spirit was not balanced by judgement, the Empire suffered a blow from which it never recovered—although it had sufficient power of endurance to last, in a diminished form, for a further four hundred years.

Chapter V

MEDIEVAL WARS

This chapter serves merely as a link between the cycles of ancient and modern history, as, although several of the medieval campaigns are tempting as illustrations, the sources for knowledge of them are far more exiguous and less reliable than in earlier or later times. For scientific truth in the deduction of causes and effects, the safe course is to base our analysis of history on established facts, and to pass over certain periods, even at the sacrifice of valuable confirmatory examples, where it is necessary to choose between conflicting textual or historical criticism of the evidence. It is true that controversy has raged round the tactical rather than the strategical details of medieval military history, but the dust thus raised is apt to envelop both, in the view of the normal student of war, and to make him perhaps excessively dubious of deductions drawn from this period. But, without including it in our specific analysis, certain of its episodes may be worth sketching, not least as a means to suggest their potential interest and profit.

In the West during the Middle Ages the spirit of feudal chivalry was inimical to military art, though the drab stupidity of its military course is lightened by

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a few bright gleams—no fewer perhaps, in proportion, than at any other period in history.

The Normans provided some of the earliest gleams, and their descendants continued to illuminate the course of medieval warfare. The value they put on Norman blood led them to expend brains in substitution for it, with notable profit.

The date which every schoolboy knows, if he knows no other, 1066, was marked by strategy and tactics as skilful as their result was decisive, decisive not only for the immediate issue but in its effect on the whole course of history. William of Normandy's invasion of England profited from a strategic distraction, and thereby gained at the outset the virtues of an indirect approach. This distraction was the landing of King Harold's rebel brother, Tostig, and his ally, Harold Hardrada, King of Norway, on the Yorkshire coast. This had seemed less immediate a danger than William's invasion. But it matured earlier, and thus gave added effectiveness to William's plans, even though it was promptly defeated. Two days after the annihilation of the Norse invaders at Stamford Bridge, William landed on the Sussex coast.

Instead of advancing northward, he lured Harold into a precipitate dash southwards—with only a fraction of his force—by ravaging the lands of Kent and Sussex. The further south Harold came, and the sooner he gave battle, the further, both in distance and time, would he be separated from his reinforcements. If this was William's calculation, it was justified by events. He brought Harold to battle within sight of the Channel coast, and decided the issue by a tactical indirect approach—ordering a feigned flight by part of his force which led his opponents to dislocate their own dispositions. And, in the final phase, the device of high angle archery fire which caused Harold's death

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might be classified as an indirect fire approach!

William's strategy after this victory is equally significant. Instead of marching direct on London, he first secured Dover, and his own sea communications. On reaching the outskirts of London, he avoided any direct assault, but made a circle, and a circular swathe of devastation, round London to the west and then to the north. Threatened with starvation, the capital surrendered when William had reached Berkhamstead.

The next century witnessed a further proof of Norman genius for war, in one of the most astonishing campaigns in history. This was the conquest of the greater part of Ireland, as well as the repulse of a strong Norse invasion, by Earl 'Strongbow' and a few hundred knights from the Welsh Marches—an achievement remarkable for the extreme slenderness of the means, the extreme difficulty of the forest and bog country, and for the adaptability with which the conquerors recast and reversed the conventional feudal methods of war. They showed their skill and calculation by the way they repeatedly lured their opponents to battle in open ground, where their mounted charges had full effect; by the way they exploited feigned retreats, diversions, rear attacks to break up the opposing formation; by the strategic surprises, night attacks, and use of archery to overcome opposition when they could not lure an enemy from the shelter of his defences.

The thirteenth century, however, is more plentiful still in strategic fruits. The first were gathered in 1216, when King John saved his kingdom, after almost losing it, by a campaign wherein pure strategy was un-mixed with battles. His means were mobility; the strong resisting power then possessed by fortresses; and the psychological power inherent in the dislike of the townsmen for the barons and their foreign ally,

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Louis of France. When Louis, after landing in east Kent, occupied London and Winchester, John was too weak to oppose him in battle ; and most of the country was dominated by the barons. But John still preserved the fortresses of Windsor, Reading, Wallingford, and Oxford—which commanded the line of the Thames and separated the baronial forces north and south of it—while the key stronghold of Dover remained untaken in Louis's rear. John had fallen back to Dorset, but when the situation became clearer, he marched north, in July, to Worcester, securing the line of the Severn and thus establishing a barrage to prevent the tide of rebellion flowing further to the west and south-west. Thence he moved east along the already secured line of the Thames as if to relieve Windsor.

To confirm the besiegers in this belief, he sent a detachment of Welsh archers to fire into their camp at night, while he himself swerved north-east, and, thanks to this start, won the race to Cambridge. He was now able to establish a further barrage across the routes to the north, while the main French forces were tied to the siege of Dover. His success in circumscribing and contracting the area of opposition and disaffection spelt the failure of the rebels and their ally, even though King John's own reign was ended by his death in October. If he died of a surfeit of peaches and new ale, their hopes died of a surfeit of strategic strongholds.

The next successful baronial insurrection was broken by the masterly strategy of Prince Edward, later Edward I, in 1265. The sequel to King Henry III's defeat at Lewes had been to establish the supremacy of the baronial party throughout most of England, except on the Welsh Marches. Thither Simon de Montfort marched, crossing the Severn and pursuing his triumphant path as far as Newport. Prince Edward,

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who had escaped from the baronial army to join his adherents in the border counties, dislocated de Montfort's plans by seizing the Severn bridges behind him, and then moving down on his rear. Edward not only threw him back across the Usk, but, by a raid with three galleys on his ships at Newport, frustrated his new plan of transporting his army back to England. De Montfort was thus forced to undertake a roundabout and exhausting march north through the barren districts of Wales, while Edward fell back to Worcester to hold the Severn against his arrival. Then, when de Montfort's son marched to his relief with an army from eastern England, Edward utilized his central position to crush each of the de Montforts in turn while they were separated and blindfolded—by march and counter-march on his part which exploited mobility to achieve a couple of shattering surprises.

Edward, as king, was to make an even greater contribution to military science in his Welsh wars, not only in developing the use of the bow and the combination of cavalry charges with archery fire, but, still more, in his strategic method of conquest. The problem was to subdue a hardy and savage mountain race who could evade battle by retiring to the hills, and then re-occupy the valleys when the invader broke off operations for the winter. If Edward's means were comparatively limited he had an advantage in the fact that the area of the country was also limited. His solution was a combination of mobility and strategic points. By building castles at these points, by connecting them with roads, and by keeping his opponents constantly on the move—so that they had no chance to recuperate physically and psychologically, or recover geographically, during the winter—he split up and wore down their power of resistance. As his method was a reflection of the Roman, so it fore-

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shadowed our own on the North-West frontier of India.

Edward's strategic gifts did not survive him, however, and in the Hundred Years' War there is nothing to learn, save negatively, from the strategy of his grandson or his great-grandson. Their purposeless parades through France were mostly ineffective; and the few which had greater results were the outcome of their greater folly. For in the campaigns of Crécy and Poitiers, Edward III and the Black Prince respectively got themselves into perilous situations. These had the extremely indirect and unintended merit that the very predicament of the English incited their direct-minded opponents to rush headlong into battle under conditions all to their disadvantage—and thus give the English the chance to rescue themselves from their predicament. For in a defensive battle, on ground chosen by the English, their use of the longbow in face of the futile tactics of the French chivalry gave them an assured tactical superiority.

The severity of these defeats in battle proved, however, of ultimate advantage to the French. For in the next stage of the war they adhered steadfastly to the Fabian policy of the Constable du Guesclin. The strategy by which he carried out this policy was to avoid battle with the main English army, while constantly hampering the movement, and contracting the territory, of his opponents. Far removed from a passive evasion of battle, his strategy exploited mobility and surprise to a degree that few generals have matched—cutting off convoys, cutting up detachments, and capturing isolated garrisons. Always taking the line of least expectation, his surprise attacks on such garrisons, often by night, were helped both by his new and rapid storm methods and by his psychologically calculated choice of objectives where the garrisons were discontented or the population ripe for treachery. So,

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also, he fanned every flame of local unrest—as an immediate distraction to the enemy's attention and an ultimate subtraction from their territory.

Within less than five years, du Guesclin had reduced the vast English possessions in France to a slender strip of territory between Bordeaux and Bayonne. He had done it without fighting a battle. Indeed, he never pressed the attack on even a small English force if it had gained time to take up defensive dispositions. Other generals have maintained, in common with moneylenders, the principle 'no advance without security'; du Guesclin's principle was: 'No attack without surprise'.

The next serious English attempt at foreign conquest was at least inspired by method, and by a closer calculation of end and means—after a rash beginning. For Henry V's most famous campaign was his most foolish. In the 'Edwardian' parade which culminated at Agincourt, the French had only to block Henry's path to ensure his collapse from hunger; but their leaders had forgotten the lesson of Crécy and the teaching of du Guesclin. They thought that with a four-to-one superiority of force it would be shameful to use this superiority for anything save a direct attack. And as a result they provided a more shameful repetition of Crécy and Poitiers. After this escape, Henry V employed what may be called a 'block system' strategy, seeking permanent conquest by methodical extensions of territory, in which the population was conciliated as a means to secure his tenure. The interest and value of Henry's later campaigns lies in their grand strategy rather than in their strategy.

In the realm of strategy our survey of the Middle Ages may well close with Edward IV, who in 1461 gained his throne, and in 1471 regained it, after being an exile, by his exceptional use of mobility.

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In the first campaign the result was mainly due to swiftness of judgement and movement. Edward was engaged against the local Lancastrians in Wales when he got word that the main Lancastrian army was coming down from the north upon London. Turning back, he reached Gloucester on the 20th of February—where he learnt of the Lancastrian victory at Saint Albans on the 17th of February over the Yorkist force under Warwick. Saint Albans to London was twenty miles, Gloucester to London more than one hundred miles; and the Lancastrians had three days in hand. But at Burford, on the 22nd of February, Edward was joined by Warwick, and heard that the Corporation of London was still arguing the terms of surrender—with the city gates shut. Edward left Burford next day, entered London on the 26th of February, and was there proclaimed king, while the discomfited Lancastrians retired to the north. When he followed them up, he risked much by attacking an army of superior strength in its chosen position at Towton. But the advantage was regained for him by the accident of a snowstorm and its exploitation by his subordinate, Fauconberg, who galled the blinded defenders with arrows until they indulged in the fatal relief of a disordered charge.

In 1471 there was more subtlety and no less mobility in Edward's strategy. He had lost his throne in the interval; but with a loan of 50,000 crowns from his brother-in-law, 1,200 followers, and some promissory notes of assistance from his former supporters in England, he attempted to retrieve his fortune. When he set sail from Flushing, the coasts of England were guarded against him, but, following the line of least expectation, he landed in the Humber on the shrewd calculation that as this district was Lancastrian in sympathy it would be unguarded. Moving swiftly, before the news of his landing could spread and his foes could

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gather, he reached York. Thence he marched down the London road and neatly swerved past a force blocking the way at Tadcaster. Keeping the lead from this force, which turned to pursue him, his threat to the next opposing force, which awaited him at Newark, induced it to retire eastwards. Thereupon Edward turned south-west to Leicester, where he gathered in more adherents. He then headed for Coventry, where Warwick, now his chief opponent, was assembling his forces. Having drawn both his pursuers thither, and having still further increased his force at the enemy's expense, he turned south-east and marched straight on London, which opened its gates to him. Now feeling strong enough to accept battle, he marched out to greet his long-baffled pursuers on their arrival at Barnet; and here a fog-confused battle ended in his favour.

That same day the Lancastrian Queen, Margaret of Anjou, landed at Weymouth with some French mercenaries. Gathering her adherents in the West, she marched to unite with the army which the Earl of Pembroke had raised in Wales. By swiftness again, Edward reached the edge of the Cotswolds while her army was marching north along the Bristol-Gloucester road in the valley below. And then, in a long day's race—one army in the valley, the other on the heights above—he caught hers in the evening at Tewkesbury, having prevented it crossing the Severn at Gloucester by sending orders ahead to the Constable to close the gates. Nearly forty miles had been covered since day-break. That night he camped too close to the Lancastrians for them to escape. Their position was strong defensively, but Edward used his bombards as well as archers to gall them into a charge, and thus gained a decisive advantage in the morning's battle.

Edward's strategy was exceptional in its mobility but typical of the age in its lack of subtlety. For medie-

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val strategy had normally the simple and direct aim of seeking immediate battle. If the result was not indecisive it was usually decisive against those who sought it, unless they could induce the defender to become tactically the assailant.

The best example of strategy in the Middle Ages comes not from the West but from the East. For the thirteenth century, strategically distinguished in the West, was made outstanding by the paralysing lesson in strategy taught by the Mongols to European chivalry. In scale and in quality, in surprise and in mobility, in the strategic and in the tactical indirect approach, their campaigns surpass any in history. In Jenghiz Khan's conquest of China we can trace his use of Taitong-Fu to bait successive traps as Bonaparte later utilized the fortress of Mantua. And by far-flung movements with a combination of three armies he finally broke up the moral and military cohesion of the Kin empire. When in 1220 he invaded the Karismian empire, whose centre of power lay in modern Turkestan, one force distracted the enemy's attention to the approach from Kashgar in the south; then the main mass appeared in the north; and, screened by its operations, he himself with his reserve army swung wider still—and, after disappearing into the Kizyl-Kum desert, debouched by surprise at Bokhara in the rear of the enemy's defensive lines and armies.

In 1241, his general, Sabutai, set out to instruct Europe. While one army, as a strategic flank guard, marched through Galicia—engaging the attention of the Polish, German, and Bohemian forces, besides inflicting successive defeats—the main army in three widely separated columns swept through Hungary to the Danube. In this advance, the two outer columns formed both a shield and a cloak to the later released move of the central column. Then, converging on the

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Danube near Gran, only to be balked by the assembly of the Hungarian army on the far bank, the Mongols, by a skilfully graduated retirement, lured their opponents away from the shelter of the river and the reach of reinforcements.

Finally, by a swift night manœuvre and surprise on the Sajo river, Sabutai dislocated and annihilated the Hungarian army and became master of the central plains of Europe—until he voluntarily relinquished his conquest a year later, to the astonished relief of a Europe which had no power to eject him.¹

¹ The strategy and tactics of the Mongols are dealt with more fully in the author's earlier book *Great Captains Unveiled*.

Chapter VI

THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY— GUSTAVUS, CROMWELL, TURENNE

WE come to the first 'Great War' of modern history, the Thirty Years' War. Incidentally, those who use this description for the war of 1914-18 are belated in their historical nomenclature, for even three centuries previously the title was growing threadbare with hard wear.

The Thirty Years' War reveals no campaign that can be called decisive. The nearest was the final duel between Gustavus and Wallenstein which, through the former's death in the culminating battle of Lutzen, was decisive in quenching the possibility of a great Protestant confederation under Swedish leadership. But for the French intervention, and Wallenstein's murder, it might have been decisive in establishing a united Germany more than three centuries before this was achieved. Such results and possibilities were indirectly gained, for the only pitched battle of the campaign ended in defeat for those in whose favour it tilted the scales of the war. This defeat, partly due to the inferiority of Wallenstein's fighting machine to that of the Swedes, was also partly due to Wallenstein's failure to profit tactically by his strategical opportunity—for he had obtained prior to the battle a

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very real advantage. And it is worth while to note that this had come through not one, but three, successive indirect approaches—which, indeed, had changed the whole aspect of the war.

Called back to command a non-existent army by the abject entreaties of the sovereign who had wronged him, Wallenstein had gathered within three months some 40,000 soldiers of fortune, drawn by the glamour of his name. Despite the urgent appeal for aid from Bavaria, then being overrun by Gustavus's all-conquering army, Wallenstein instead turned north against Gustavus's weaker ally, the Saxons, and after throwing them out of Bohemia, moved on towards Saxony itself. He even compelled the reluctant Elector of Bavaria to bring his army to join him, thus apparently leaving Bavaria more defenceless than ever. But the reality was otherwise, and Wallenstein's calculation justified—for the threat of losing Saxony, his junior partner, compelled Gustavus to quit Bavaria and hurry to the rescue. Before he could come up, Wallenstein and the Elector had united. Faced with their combined forces, Gustavus fell back on Nuremberg. Thither Wallenstein followed, but finding the Swedes strongly posted, remarked that 'battles enough had been fought already, and it was time to try another method'. Instead of pitting his new levies against the long-invincible Swedes, he dug himself into a position from which—while his army rested securely, gaining confidence daily—he could command Gustavus's lines of supply with his light horse. He maintained this method and object unswervingly, deaf to all challenges to battle, until the Swedish king, shadowed by the gaunt spectre of famine, attempted a vain assault on his position. The repulse was, militarily, only an unfortunate incident; politically, its echoes resounded throughout Europe. If it had not dislocated, it had

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disturbed the moral ascendancy which Gustavus's many victories had gained him, and thereby loosened his hold over the German states. Wallenstein combined a realistic grasp of the limitations of his means with a far-seeing calculation of the grand-strategical end.

From Nuremberg, Gustavus marched south against Bavaria once more—and Wallenstein turned north against Saxony. The master move brought Gustavus to heel as promptly as before ; but by superb marching he came up before Wallenstein could intimidate the Saxons into a separate peace. And in the desperate battle of Lutzen which followed, the Swedish army redeemed its strategic set-back by a tactical success ; but at the price of its leader's death. This entailed the forfeiture of his project of a great protestant combination under Swedish direction. For sixteen years longer the war dragged out its weary and wasteful length, leaving Germany a desert, and yielding to France the predominant place in the polity of Europe.

The outstanding contrast between the civil wars, 1642–52, in Great Britain, and the wars of the same century on the continent, is that of the decision-compelling spirit which marked the former. The spirit which breathed through this last great conflict in our own country is excellently expressed in Defoe's *Memories of a Cavalier*—‘we never encamped or entrenched . . . or lay fenced with rivers or defiles. ’Twas the general maxim of the war—where is the enemy? Let us go and fight him.’

Yet despite this offensive spirit the First Civil War continued four years, without any battle proving clearly decisive, except tactically—and when it ultimately flickered out in 1646, left the Royalist embers still so numerous and so glowing that, with the aid of discord among the victors, the flames could burst out afresh, two years later, in a greater blaze than ever.

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In examining the reasons for this indecisiveness where the spirit of decisiveness was so manifest, we may note that the military campaigns took the form of repeated direct advances by one side or the other, interspersed with what in modern language would be called 'mopping up' operations, which had but a local and transient effect—at the price of a drain of strength.

At the outset the Royal forces were based on the West and Midlands; the Parliamentary forces, on London. The first Royalist advance on London came to an ignominious end at Turnham Green, often styled the Valmy of the Civil War, a bloodless ending which was the moral sequel to the bloody inconclusiveness of the Battle of Edgehill, fought by the main armies earlier in the advance.

Thenceforward, Oxford and its surrounding towns became the fortified pivot of the Royalists. On the edge of this zone the two main armies for long confronted each other ineffectively, while a see-saw struggle between local forces and detachments went on in the west and north. At last, in September 1643, the urgent need of the besieged city of Gloucester compelled the main Parliamentary army under Lord Essex to advance to its relief by a restricted *détour* past the flank of the Oxford zone. This enabled the Royalists to bar his homeward path; but, again, a direct clash at Newbury yielded an indecisive result.

Natural war-weariness might now have brought the struggle to a negotiated end but for Charles's political blunder in making a truce with the Irish rebels. This, by its appearance of bringing Catholic Irish to subdue Protestant England, brought instead the greater counter-weight of Presbyterian Scotland into the scales against the Royal cause. Encouraged by the fact that a Scottish army was advancing to engage the northern

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Royalists, the Parliamentarians now again concentrated their strength for a direct advance on the Oxford zone—an advance which brought no greater result than the occupation of a few outlying fortresses. The king, indeed, was even able to detach Rupert for a swift concentration with the northern Royalists against the Scots. Unhappily for him, tactical defeat at Marston Moor more than undid the effect of this strategic opportunity. But the victors profited little. Once more the ineffectiveness of the direct and main move on Oxford produced loss of heart and desertion and, save for the inflexible purpose of men like Cromwell, might have led to a peace of war-weariness. Fortunately for the Parliament, the Royal cause was crumbling even worse, internally—far more than from external blows. Thus it was a morally and numerically inferior foe, only preserved so long by faulty Parliamentary strategy, that Fairfax and Cromwell with the new model army overthrew at Naseby in 1645. Yet even this tactically decisive victory did not prevent the war continuing for another year.

It is a different picture when we come to the Second Civil War, with Cromwell as the ruling mind and the twenty-eight-year-old John Lambert as his brilliant assistant. When it became known, late in April 1648, that the Scots were raising an army to invade England in support of the Royalists, Fairfax prepared to march north to meet them, while Cromwell was sent west to deal with the Royalist risings in South Wales. Then, however, further outbreaks in Kent and East Anglia tied Fairfax to those parts while the invasion of the north was developing. Lambert was left with only a small force to delay the invaders—which he did most effectively by the indirect course of constantly threatening their flank as they marched down the west coast route, while checking any attempt of theirs to cross

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the Pennines and rally their friends in Yorkshire.

At last, on the fall of Pembroke (the 11th of July 1648), Cromwell was able to move north. Instead of advancing direct to meet the Scots, he marched in a sweeping curve by Nottingham and Doncaster—collecting supplies on the way—then north-westward to join Lambert at Otley on the flank of the Scottish army—which was strung out between Wigan and Preston, with a corps of 3,500 under Langdale covering the left flank. Cromwell had only 8,600 men, including Lambert's horse and the Yorkshire militia, against some 20,000 of the enemy. But his descent on the tail of the Scottish column at Preston dislocated its balance, and caused it to turn and meet him in successive fractions. On Preston Moor, Langdale's corps was overthrown. Then, pressing the pursuit fiercely, Cromwell rolled up the Scottish column, driving it through Wigan to Uttoxeter and Ashbourne, where—checked in front by the midland militia and pressed in rear by Cromwell's cavalry—it surrendered on the 25th of August. This victory was decisive; not only did it crush the foes of the Parliament, but it enabled the army to 'purge' the Parliament, and to bring the king to trial and execution.

The subsequent invasion of Scotland is really a separate war, waged by the newly established regime, to forestall the plan of the king's son, the future Charles II, to regain the lost throne by Scottish aid. Thus it hardly comes in the category of campaigns which have decisively affected the course of history. At the same time it furnishes remarkable evidence of how strongly Cromwell was imbued with the strategy of indirect approach. When he found the Scottish army, under Leslie, in position across his path to Edinburgh, a mere contact-making engagement satisfied him of the strength of Leslie's situation. Although

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within sight of his goal, and short of supplies, he had such self-restraint as to abstain from a frontal assault on disadvantageous ground. Despite his innate eagerness for battle he would not venture it unless he could draw the enemy into the open and get a chance to strike at an exposed flank. Hence he fell back on Musselburgh, and then to Dunbar, to re-provision his forces. Within a week he advanced afresh and at Musselburgh issued three days' rations as a preliminary to a wide manœuvre through the hills of Edinburgh and the enemy's rear. And when Leslie succeeded in moving across to bar his path directly at Corstorphine Hill (the 21st of August 1650), Cromwell, though now far from his base, sought yet another approach by a manœuvre to his left, only to be blocked afresh by Leslie at Gogar. Most men would have gambled on a direct battle. But not Cromwell. Cutting his loss—in sick, due to exposure and fatigue—he fell back on Musselburgh and thence to Dunbar, drawing Leslie after him. He would not, however, embark his army, as some of his officers urged, but waited at Dunbar in the hope that the enemy would make a false move that might become his opportunity.

Leslie, however, was a shrewd opponent, and his next move deepened Cromwell's danger. Leaving the main road, Leslie made a circuit round Dunbar during the night of September the 1st, and occupied Doon Hill, overlooking the road to Berwick. He also sent a detachment to seize the pass at Cockburnspath seven miles further south. Thus next morning Cromwell found himself cut off from England. His plight was all the worse because his supplies were already short and his sick-list lengthening.

It had been Leslie's plan to wait on the Heights in anticipation that the English would try to force their way along the road to Berwick, and then to descend

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upon them. But the ministers of the kirk were eager to see the jaws of 'the Lord's' trap close upon 'the Moabites', and their clamour was reinforced by signs that the invader might be contemplating escape by sea. Moreover, the weather on the 2nd was so tempestuous as almost to drive the Scottish troops off the bare crest of Doon Hill. About 4 p.m. they were seen to be descending the slopes and taking up a position on the lower ground near the Berwick road, where they had more shelter from the rain, while their front was covered by the Brock burn—which ran through a ravine until it neared the sea.

Cromwell and Lambert were together watching the movement, and into their minds, simultaneously, came the thought that—'it did give us an opportunity and advantage to attempt upon the Enemy'. For the Scots' left wing was wedged between the hill and the steep-sided burn, and would have difficulty in helping the right wing if an attack was concentrated there. At a council of war that evening Lambert put the case for an immediate stroke against the Scots' right wing, to roll up their line, while at the same time concentrating the artillery against their cramped left wing. His arguments carried the council, and in recognition of his initiative Cromwell entrusted him with the conduct of the opening moves. During the night, 'a drakie nicht full of wind and weit', the troops were moved into position along the north side of the burn. After marshalling the guns opposite the Scots' left wing, Lambert rode back to the other flank at daybreak to lead the cavalry's attack near the sea. Helped by surprise, both they and the infantry in the centre were able to cross the burn without difficulty, and although their further advance was temporarily checked, the intervention of the English reserves turned the scales on the seaward flank, and enabled Cromwell to roll up

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the Scottish line from right to left—into a corner, between hill and burn, from which the Scottish troops could only extricate themselves by breaking into flight. Thus by a tactical indirect approach, following instantly upon the over-confident opponent's slip, Cromwell shattered a force twice his own strength—sealing with triumph a campaign in which he had refused all temptation, even to the apparent hazard of his fortunes, to abandon his strategy of indirect approach.

The victory of Dunbar gave Cromwell the control of southern Scotland. It practically wiped the army of the Kirk, and the Covenanters as a political factor, off the balance-sheet of the war. Only the pure Royalist element of the Highlands was left to oppose him. The process of settlement was delayed by Cromwell's grave illness; meantime Leslie had breathing space to organize and train the new Royalist army beyond the Forth.

When, late in June 1651, Cromwell was fit enough to resume operations, he was faced with a difficult problem. His solution, for subtlety and masterly calculation, compares favourably with any strategic combination in the history of war. Although now, for the first time, the superiority in numbers was on his side, he was faced by a canny adversary established in a region of marsh and moorland which afforded every natural advantage to the weaker side in barring the approach to Stirling. Unless Cromwell could overthrow the resistance within a brief time he would be doomed to spend another trying winter in Scotland, with inevitable suffering to his troops and the likelihood of increasing difficulties at home. And to dislodge the enemy would not suffice, for a partial success would only disperse the enemy into the Highlands, where they would remain a thorn in his side.

Let us watch the unfolding of Cromwell's plan.

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First he menaces Leslie in front, storming Callander House, near Falkirk. Then he passes, in stages, his whole army across the Firth of Forth and marches on Perth, thereby not only turning Leslie's defensive barrier across the direct approach to Stirling but gaining possession of the key to Leslie's supply area. By this manœuvre he had, however, uncovered the route to England. Here lies the supreme artistry of Cromwell's plan. He was on the rear of an enemy now threatened with hunger and desertion—and he left a bolt-hole open. As one of his opponents said, 'We must either starve, disband, or go with a handful of men into England. This last seems to be the least ill, yet it seems very desperate.' They naturally chose it, and at the end of July started on the march south into England.

Cromwell, foreseeing this, had prepared their reception—with the aid of the authorities at Westminster. The militia was called out promptly, all suspected Royalists were kept under surveillance, hidden stores of arms were seized. Once more the Scots moved down the west coast route. Cromwell dispatched Lambert's cavalry to follow them, while Harrison moved obliquely across from Newcastle to Warrington, and Fleetwood moved north with the midland militia. Lambert slipped round the flank of the enemy, and joined Harrison on the 13th of August. The two then opposed an elastic delaying resistance to the oncoming invader. Cromwell, meantime, was marching, twenty miles a day in August heat, down the east coast route and then south-westwards. Thus four forces were converging on the trapped invader. Charles's turn away from the route for London towards the Severn valley only delayed for a few days, and failed to disturb, the closing of the jaws. On the 3rd of September, the anniversary of Dunbar, the battlefield of Worcester provided Cromwell with his 'crowning mercy'.

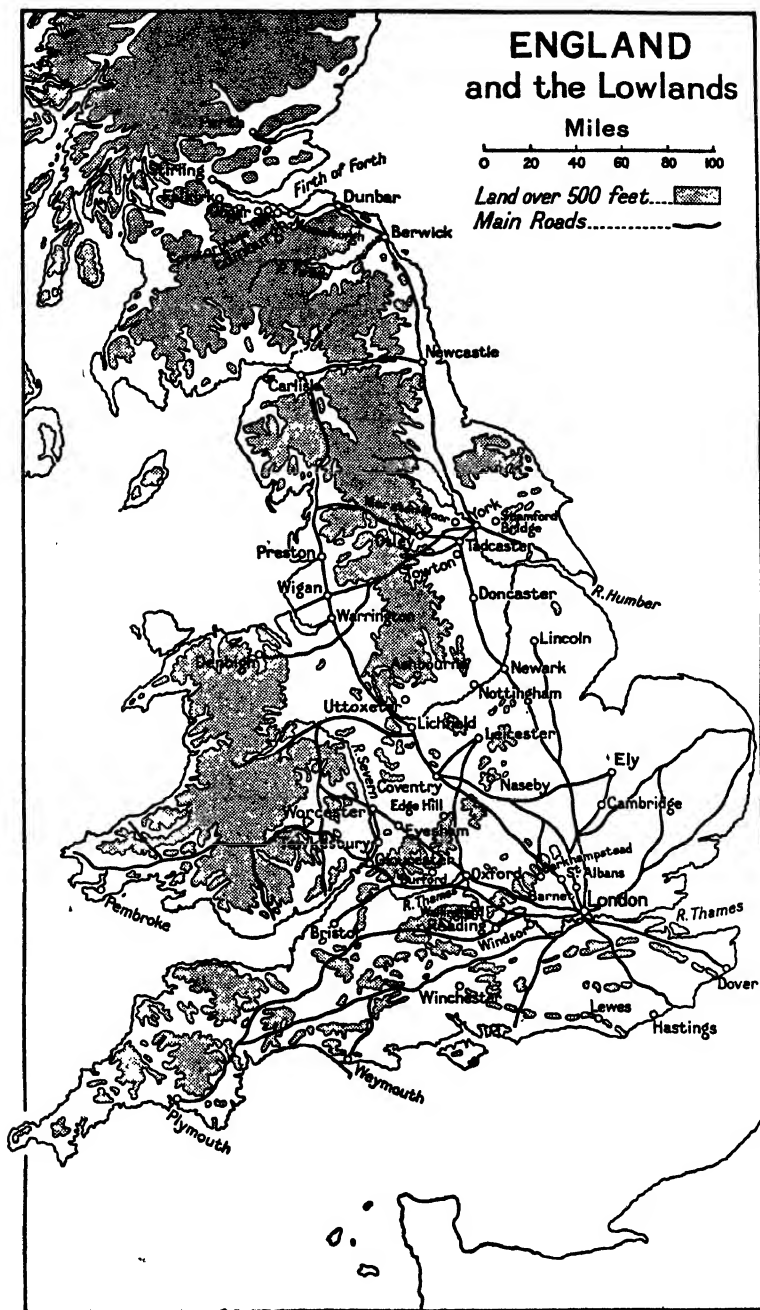
ENGLAND and the Lowlands

Miles

0 20 40 60 80 100

Land over 500 feet.....

Main Roads.....



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armies. He, too, was manœuvred into a position where Turenne had him at a disadvantage, on the Sasbach; but at the outset of the action Turenne was killed by a cannon-shot—and with his fall the balance of the war changed again.

Why is the decisiveness of this winter campaign of Turenne's in such startling contrast with the rest of the campaigns of the seventeenth century in Europe? It was an age when generals, however limited their horizon, were at least supremely skilful in manœuvre. But in this art they were so well matched that even flank moves which in other ages might have succeeded, were adroitly parried. And a real dislocation of the opponent's system was only this once achieved. Turenne is famous as the one Great Captain who improved continuously with age, and there is thus a special significance in the way in which, after commanding in more campaigns than any other general in all history, he reached in his last campaign a solution of the problem of achieving a decision in seventeenth-century warfare. For he did it without departing from the golden rule of those times—that highly-trained soldiers were too costly to be squandered.

It would seem that his experience had taught him that under such conditions a decisive result could only be gained by a strategic plan in which the approach was radically more indirect than any yet conceived. Thus, at a time when all manœuvres were based on fortress pivots—which formed the protected supply depots for the maintenance of the field armies—he cut loose from such a base of operations, and sought in the combination of surprise and mobility not only a decision but his security. It was a just calculation, not a gamble. For the dislocation—mental, moral, and logistical—created among the enemy, afforded him throughout an ample margin of security.

Chapter VII

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY— MARLBOROUGH AND FREDERICK

The War of the Spanish Succession (1701–13) is remarkable for its curiously dual nature. In policy it was both an extreme case of war with a limited aim, and a decisive struggle to enforce or break the predominant power of France under Louis XIV. In strategy it mainly comprised a futile series of direct approaches or scarcely more purposeful indirect moves, yet was punctuated by a number of brilliant indirect approaches, mainly associated with the illustrious name of Marlborough. The significant interest of these lies in the way that they mark the several turning-points of the war.

The coalition against France comprised Austria, Great Britain, several of the German states, Holland, Denmark, and Portugal. Louis XIV's main support came from Spain, Bavaria, and at the outset, Savoy.

It was in Northern Italy that the war opened, while the other armies were preparing. The Austrians, under Eugène, assembled in Tyrol, and made ostentatious preparations for a direct advance. Thereupon, the opposing army, under Catinat, placed itself to block their path at the Rivoli defile. But Eugène, having secretly reconnoitred a difficult passage through the

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mountains long unused by troops, came down to the plains by a wide circuit to the east. Pressing his advantage by subsequent manœuvres which repeatedly deluded his opponents as to his intentions, he finally drew them into a disastrous attack upon him at Chiari, and established his position firmly in northern Italy. The result of this indirect approach not only gave the allies a valuable moral tonic at the outset of their struggle with the reputedly invincible armies of the *Grand Monarque*, but dealt a crippling blow to the French and Spanish power in Italy. One important sequel was that the Duke of Savoy, an instinctive adherent of the stronger party, changed sides.

In 1702 the main struggle began. The largest French army was assembled in Flanders, where the French had fortified the sixty-mile long Lines of Brabant from Antwerp to Huy, on the Meuse, to secure the rear of their proposed advance. At the threat of invasion, the instinct of the Dutch was to sit tight within their fortresses. Marlborough had a different conception of war. But he did not exchange this passive defensive for a direct offensive against the French army, under Boufflers, then marching towards the Rhine. Instead, uncovering the precious fortresses, he moved swiftly towards the Lines of Brabant, and the French line of retreat. Boufflers, at once feeling the pull of this moral 'lassoo', hurried back. Physically tired and morally dislocated, the French army might have been an easy victim for Marlborough, who was waiting ready to embrace it; but the Dutch deputies, content to see the invasion called off, opposed the consummation by battle. Twice more that year Boufflers was drawn into a trap by Marlborough, and each time the hesitations of the Dutch helped to extricate him.

The next year Marlborough planned a subtle manœuvre to gain possession of Antwerp and thereby

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penetrate the fortified breakwater. By a direct advance westward from Maastricht he hoped to rivet the French main army, under Villeroi, to the southern end of the Lines. Next, a Dutch force under Cohorn was to attack Ostend, assisted by the fleet, while another Dutch force, under Spaar, moved on Antwerp from the north-west—these moves from the seaboard being intended to make the French commander at Antwerp look over his shoulder, and draw away part of the forces holding the northern end of the Lines. Four days later, a third Dutch force, under Opdam, would strike at them from the north-east, while Marlborough would give Villeroi the slip and race northward to join in the converging stroke at Antwerp. The first phase opened promisingly; Marlborough's threat drew Villeroi's army down towards the Meuse. Then, however, Cohorn dropped the Ostend move in favour of a narrower move near Antwerp in conjunction with Spaar—which did not have the same distracting effect. And Opdam, to his danger, moved prematurely. Moreover, when Marlborough started on his switch-march to the north, he did not succeed in giving Villeroi the slip; in fact, Villeroi beat him in the race—by sending Boufflers ahead with 30 of his cavalry squadrons and 3,000 grenadiers holding on to their stirrup-leathers. This mobile force covered nearly forty miles in twenty-four hours, and on the 1st of July, together with the Antwerp garrison, fell upon Opdam, whose force was badly mauled before it made good its escape. What Marlborough had proudly christened 'the Great Design' was completely wrecked.

Following this disappointment, Marlborough proposed a direct assault upon the Lines just south of Antwerp. The Dutch commanders rejected his proposal, with good reason—since it would have meant a frontal attack upon a fortified position held by nearly

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equal forces. Along with his brilliance in manœuvre, Marlborough showed at times, especially times of disappointment, a touch of the reckless gambler. British writers of history, dazzled by his exploits as well as his personal charm, are apt to be unjust to the Dutch—who had more at stake than Marlborough. Danger was too close to their country for them to regard war as a fascinating game or a great adventure; they were acutely aware that, like Admiral Jellicoe, two centuries later, they ‘could lose the war in an afternoon’—if they courted a battle in circumstances that carried a serious risk of decisive defeat.

In face of the unanimous judgement of the Dutch generals, Marlborough gave up the idea of assaulting the Antwerp sector, and turned back to the Meuse, where he covered the siege of Huy. While there he again urged, late in August, an attack on the Lines, with somewhat better justification—since the southern sector was more favourable. But his arguments failed to convince the Dutch.

Marlborough’s intense disgust with the Dutch made him the more susceptible to the arguments that Wratislaw, the Imperial envoy, now skilfully urged in favour of switching his forces to the Danube. The conjunction of these two influences produced in 1704, with the aid of Marlborough’s broad strategic outlook, one of the most striking examples in history of the indirect approach. Of the main hostile armies, one under Villeroy was in Flanders; one under Tallard lay on the upper Rhine between Mannheim and Strasbourg, with smaller linking forces; and a combined army of Bavarians and French, under the Elector of Bavaria and Marsin, was near Ulm and the Danube. This last was pushing menacingly forward from Bavaria towards Vienna. Marlborough planned to switch the English part of his army from the Meuse to the Dan-

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ube, and then to strike decisively at the Bavarians, the junior partner of the enemy firm. This long-range move to a point so far from his base, and from the direct interests which he was shielding in the north, was audacious by any standard, but much more so by that of the cautious strategy of his time. Its security lay in the dislocating effect of its surprise. This was contained in the 'variable' direction of his march, which at each stage threatened alternative objectives, and left the enemy in doubt as to his actual aim.

When he moved south up the Rhine it first appeared that he might be taking the Moselle route into France; then, when he pressed on beyond Coblenz, it looked as if he might be aiming at the French forces in Alsace—and by making visible preparations to bridge the Rhine at Philipsburg, he reinforced this natural delusion. But on reaching the neighbourhood of Mannheim, whence his obvious direction was south-west, he turned south-east instead, vanished into the wooded hills bordering the valley of the Neckar, and thence marched across the base of the Rhine–Danube triangle towards Ulm. The mask of strategic ambiguity which had covered his march helped to compensate its rather slow pace—averaging about ten miles a day for some six weeks. After meeting Eugène and the Margrave of Baden at Gross Heppach, Marlborough moved on with the forces of the latter, while the former went back to detain, or at least to delay, the French armies on the Rhine—whither Villeroi had belatedly followed Marlborough from Flanders.¹

But although Marlborough had placed himself on the rear of the Franco-Bavarian army in relation

¹ Until Marlborough definitely quitted the Rhine valley he had always the power of making a swift return down the river to Flanders by embarking his troops in the boats that had been collected. This was a further cause of distraction to the French commanders.

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to France, he was still on their front in relation to Bavaria. This geographical juxtaposition combined with other conditions to hinder the exploitation of his strategic advantage. Of these conditions, one was general to the age; the rigidity of the tactical organization of armies, which made difficult the completion of a strategic manœuvre. A general could draw the enemy to 'water', but could not make him drink—could not make him accept battle against his inclination. A more particular handicap was that Marlborough had to share the command with the cautious Margrave of Baden.

The combined armies of the Elector of Bavaria and Marshal Marsin occupied a fortified position on the Danube at Dillingen, east of Ulm and midway between there and Donauwörth. As Marshal Tallard's army might move eastward from the Rhine, Ulm was a precarious place at which to seek an entry into Bavaria. Marlborough decided that he must gain a crossing at Donauwörth, the natural terminus of his new line of communications—which had been changed, for greater security, to the easterly route through Nuremberg. With Donauwörth in his possession, he would have a safe passage into Bavaria and could manœuvre securely on either bank of the Danube.

Unfortunately, the flank move across the face of the enemy's position at Dillingen was rather too obvious in purpose and slow in pace, so that the Elector was able to dispatch a strong detachment to defend Donauwörth. Although Marlborough made greater haste in the last stage of the march, the enemy were able to extend the entrenchments of the Schellenberg, the hill covering Donauwörth, by the time Marlborough arrived on the 2nd of July. Rather than allow the enemy time to complete the defences, he delivered his attack the same evening. The first assault was bloodily re-

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pulsed, with the loss of more than half the troops engaged, and it was only when the bulk of the allied armies arrived, giving them a superiority of more than four to one, that weight of numbers began to turn the scales. Even then, the issue was decided through a flanking movement which found and penetrated a weakly-held sector of the entrenchments. Marlborough admitted, in a letter, that the capture of Donauwörth '*a coûté un peu cher*'. Criticism of his tactics here was all the more general since the decisive manœuvre had been conducted by the Margrave.

The enemy's main forces now withdrew to Augsburg. Thereupon Marlborough, pressing south into Bavaria; devastated the countryside, burning hundreds of villages and all the crops—as a lever to force the Elector of Bavaria to terms or to accept battle at a disadvantage. The purpose of this brutal expedient, of which he was privately ashamed, was nullified by another condition of the time—that, war being the affair of rulers rather than of their peoples, the Elector was slow to be affected by inconveniences at second hand. Thus Tallard had time to come up from the Rhine, and he arrived at Augsburg on the 5th of August.

Fortunately, his appearance on the scene was offset by that of Eugène, who took the bold course of slipping away from before Villeroy in order to join Marlborough. Just previously it had been arranged that, under cover of the forces of Marlborough and Eugène, the Margrave should move further down the Danube to besiege the enemy-held fortress of Ingolstadt. Then, on the 9th, news came that the combining enemy armies were moving north, towards the Danube. It looked as if their aim was to strike at Marlborough's communications. Nevertheless, Marlborough and Eugène allowed the Margrave to continue his divergent march towards Ingolstadt—thereby reducing

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their combined forces to 56,000 men in face of the enemy's total of some 60,000, which might be increased. Their willingness to dispense with the Margrave was understandable in view of their distaste for his caution, but their readiness to release his forces was remarkable because of their decision to seek battle at the first opportunity. It showed great confidence in their own qualitative superiority over the enemy—perhaps over-confidence in view of the closeness of the battle which followed.

Fortunately for them, there was quite as much confidence on the other side. The Elector of Bavaria was eager to take the offensive, although most of his own troops had not yet arrived. When Tallard argued that it would be wiser to wait for them, and meantime entrench, the Elector scoffed at such caution. Tallard sarcastically retorted: 'If I were not so convinced of your Highness's integrity, I should imagine that you wished to gamble with the King of France's forces without having any of your own, to see at no risk what would happen.' It was then agreed, as a compromise, that the French forces should make a preliminary bound to a position near Blenheim, behind the little river Nebel, on the way to Donauwörth.

Here the next morning, the 13th of August, they were caught by the sudden advance of the Allies along the north bank of the Danube. Marlborough struck direct at the French right, near the Danube, while Eugène swung inland against the French left—the narrow space between the river and the hills allowed little room for manœuvre. The Allies' only advantage, apart from their spirit and training, lay in the unexpectedness of their action in seeking battle under such circumstances. This partial measure of surprise hindered the two French armies from making properly co-ordinated dispositions, so that they fought in order

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of encampment rather than in order of battle. This resulted in a scarcity of infantry in the wide central sector. But the disadvantage did not become apparent until late in the day, and might never have become important but for other slips. The first stage of the battle went adversely for the allies. The attack of Marlborough's left wing on Blenheim failed with heavy loss, and the attack of his right wing on Oberglau also failed. Eugène's attack further to the right was twice repulsed. And when Marlborough's troops in the centre were in process of crossing the Nebel, their head was smitten by a French cavalry charge that was barely repelled. Owing to a misunderstanding that was lucky for them, this counterstroke was carried out by fewer squadrons than Tallard intended. But it was followed by another counterstroke, on their exposed flank, from Marsin's cavalry—which was interrupted in the nick of time by a counter-counterstroke from part of Eugène's cavalry, unhesitatingly released by him in response to Marlborough's appeal.

If disaster had been averted, nothing more than a precarious equilibrium had been achieved. And unless Marlborough could push on he would be in a bad hole—with the marshy Nebel at his back. But Tallard was now to pay dearly for his miscalculation in allowing Marlborough to cross the river unopposed—or rather, for the ineffective execution of his design. For once Tallard's cavalry counterstrokes had failed in their purpose of overwhelming the van of Marlborough's centre, the remainder of it was able to form up across the river during the ensuing lull. And although Tallard had 50 battalions of infantry altogether to Marlborough's 48, he had only 9 in the central sector to oppose 23—owing to the fault in the initial dispositions, which he had not readjusted while there was time. When these few squares of infantry

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were eventually overwhelmed by weight of numbers and close-quarter artillery fire, Marlborough was able to push through an open gap, thereby cutting off the congested mass of the French infantry near the Danube at Blenheim, and also laying bare Marsin's flank. The latter was able to disengage himself from Eugène and withdraw without being seriously pressed, but a large part of Tallard's army was penned against the Danube and forced to surrender.

It was a victory gained at heavy cost, and at still heavier risk—in dispassionate analysis it becomes clear that the scales were turned more by the stoutness of the rank and file, together with the miscalculations of the French command, than by Marlborough's skill. But the ultimate fact of victory sufficed to make the world overlook what a gamble the battle had been. And the shattered 'invincibility' of French arms changed the whole outlook of Europe.

The allied armies, following up the French retreat, advanced to the Rhine and crossed it at Philipsburg. But the cost of victory at Blenheim now became apparent in the general disinclination to further exertions—save on Marlborough's own part—and the campaign petered out.

For 1705 Marlborough devised a plan for the invasion of France by which he would avoid the entangling network of the Flanders fortresses. While Eugène engaged the French forces in northern Italy, and the Dutch stood on the defensive in Flanders, the main allied army, under Marlborough, would advance up the Moselle on Thionville, and the Margrave's army would make a converging advance across the Saar. But the design was marred by a series of hitches. Supplies were not delivered as promised, transport was lacking, allied reinforcements fell much below expectation, and the Margrave showed a reluctance to co-

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operate—which might be traced to jealousy, but also had a better justification in an inflamed wound from which he subsequently died. Nevertheless, Marlborough persisted in his plan when every condition of success had faded—and it had become a direct approach in the narrowest sense. He pushed up the Moselle, apparently in the hope that his very weakness would tempt the French to battle. But Marshal Villars preferred to see Marlborough become weaker still through shortage of food. And Villeroi took the offensive in Flanders with such effect as to make the Dutch urgently call for aid. This dual pressure led Marlborough to break off the venture—though in the bitterness of his disappointment he made the Margrave his scapegoat. He even sent to Villars a letter of apology, for his retreat, in which he placed the entire responsibility on the Margrave's shoulders.

Marlborough's swift march back to Flanders promptly relieved the situation there. On his approach Villeroi gave up the siege of Liège and retired within the Lines of Brabant. Marlborough then devoted his mind to the elaboration of a scheme for piercing this barrier. By a feint at a weakly fortified sector near the Meuse he drew the French southward, and then, doubling back, broke through a strongly-fortified but weakly-held sector near Tirlemont. He failed, however, to exploit the opportunity by a prompt advance on Louvain and over the Dyle. That failure, it would seem, was due partly to the fact that he had deceived his allies even more thoroughly than the enemy, but still more to a momentary exhaustion of his own energy. None the less, the famous Lines were no longer a barrier.

A few weeks later he formed a fresh design which bore evidence of evolution in his generalship. If it was crowned by no greater success, it revealed a greater

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Marlborough. His previous manœuvre in Flanders had been based on pure deception, and for success had required a speed of execution which was difficult to attain with his Dutch clogs. This time he tried an indirect approach by a route that offered alternative objectives—thus producing a wide distraction of the opposing forces which diminished the need for superior speed. Swinging south of Villeroi's position near Louvain, he advanced on a line which kept the enemy in doubt as to his aim, since it threatened any of the fortresses in that area—Namur, Charleroi, Mons, and Ath. Then, on reaching Genappe, he wheeled north up the road through Waterloo towards Brussels. Villeroi hurriedly decided to march back to the rescue of the city. But just as the French were about to move, Marlborough, who had made a fresh swerve back eastwards during the night, appeared on the new front they had taken up. Owing to his distracting move it was an ill-knit front, if less vulnerable than their marching flank would have been. He had arrived just too soon for his own advantage, and the wary Dutch generals thus found reason for resisting his desire to deliver an immediate attack—arguing that, whatever the confusion on the other side, the enemy's actual position behind the Ysche was stronger than at Blenheim.

In the next year's campaign Marlborough conceived the idea of carrying out an indirect approach of far wider scope—by crossing the Alps to join Eugène. He might thus drive the French out of Italy and gain a back entrance to France, combining this land approach with amphibious operations against Toulon and with Peterborough's operations in Spain. The Dutch, modifying their usual caution, agreed to take the risk of letting him go. The project was forestalled by Villars's defeat of the Margrave of Baden and Vil-

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leroi's advance in Flanders. This venturesome move was due to Louis XIV's belief that to take the offensive 'everythwere' would create such an impression of strength as to give him the best chance of securing on favourable terms the peace that he now needed and desired. But to take the offensive in the theatre where Marlborough lay was a short cut, not to peace, but to a defeat that would spoil his aim. Marlborough lost no time in seizing his opportunity—it was, in his judgement, the second time that the French had re-deemed his prospects by their reluctance to stay quietly within their lines when the game was in their hands. He met them at Ramillies, where they had occupied a concave position. He exploited his position on the chord of the arc to execute a tactical form of indirect approach. Following an attack on the French left, which drew their reserves thither, he skilfully disengaged his own troops on that wing, and switched them across to press home the advantage gained on his own left wing, where the Danish cavalry had penetrated a gap. This menace in rear coupled with the pressure in front caused the collapse of the French. And Marlborough exploited the victory by a pursuit so effective that all Flanders and Brabant fell into his hands.

That same year the war in Italy was virtually ended by another example of the indirect approach. At the outset Eugène had been forced back as far east as Lake Garda and then into the mountains, while his ally, the Duke of Savoy, was besieged in Turin. Instead of trying to fight his way forward, Eugène out-manceuvred and slipped his opponents, cut himself adrift from his base, pressed on through Lombardy into Piedmont—and at Turin inflicted a decisive defeat on the numerically superior but mentally dislocated enemy.

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The tide of war had now ebbed to the frontiers of France, both north and south. But in 1707 disunity of purpose among the allies gave her time to rally, and the next year she concentrated her main forces against Marlborough. Tied by the leg to Flanders, and heavily outnumbered, he turned the balance by a repetition of the Danube move in reverse—whereby Eugène brought his army from the Rhine to join Marlborough. But the French were now under the able Vendôme, and they advanced before Eugène could arrive. Having induced Marlborough to fall back to Louvain by this direct menace, Vendôme scored the first trick by suddenly turning westwards—thereby regaining Ghent, Bruges, and practically all Flanders west of the Scheldt without cost. But instead of marching to oppose him directly, Marlborough hazardously thrust south-westwards, to interpose between him and the French frontier. At Oudenarde, the initial advantage gained by a strategic dislocation was pressed home by a tactical dislocation.

If Marlborough could have carried out his own wish for a prompt move on Paris it is possible that the war might have been ended. Even as it was, Louis was driven to seek peace that winter, offering terms that amply met the allies' objects. But they rejected the substance for the shadow of his complete humiliation. Marlborough himself was not blind to the value of the offer, but he was better, and keener, at making war than at making peace.

Thus the war had a fresh lease of life in 1709. Marlborough's project now was for an indirect military approach to a key political objective—his idea being to slip past the enemy's forces, mask their fortresses and aim at Paris. But this was too bold even for Eugène's stomach. Hence it was modified to a plan which avoided a direct attack on the entrenched Lines cover-

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ing the frontier between Douai and Bethune, but instead was aimed to secure the flanking fortresses of Tournai and Mons as a preliminary to an advance into France down a route east of the fortified zone.

Once again Marlborough succeeded in deceiving his opponents. His menace of a direct attack on the barrier-line led them to draw off most of the garrison of Tournai to reinforce it, whereupon Marlborough doubled back and closed upon Tournai. But this place resisted so stubbornly as to cost him two months' delay. However, a fresh threat to the lines of La Bassée enabled him to pounce upon Mons and invest it unchecked. But the French moved across rapidly enough to block his onward path and the further development of his design. This frustration led him to revert to a direct approach in which he showed too little calculation of the consequences in relation to the circumstances—less wise than Cromwell before Dunbar. Although the assault on the well-entrenched and prepared enemy holding the Malplaquet 'gateway' ended in a victory, it was at such a disproportionate cost that Villars, the defeated commander, was justified in writing to Louis, 'If God gives us another defeat like this, your Majesty's enemies will be destroyed.' His judgement was prophetic in so far as this victory in battle proved to have cost the allies their hopes of victory in the war.

In 1710 stalemate reigned, with Marlborough caged behind the bars of the *Ne Plus Ultra* lines, which the French had constructed from Valenciennes to the sea, while his political opponents were given fresh leverage to loosen his position at home. Fortune, too, turned against those who had forfeited her favours, for in 1711 Eugène's army was called away by the political situation, and Marlborough was left to face a greatly superior foe. Too weak to attempt or achieve any

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decisive operation, he could at least assert his own mastery by exploding the French boast in naming their lines *Ne Plus Ultra*. This he did by the most uncannily indirect of all his approaches—deceiving, distracting, doubling successively, until he was able to slip through the lines without firing a shot. But two months later he was recalled home to meet disgrace, and in 1712 a war-weary England left her allies to fight alone.

The Austrians and Dutch, now under Eugène, still held their own for a time, and both sides were growing equally exhausted. But in 1712 Villars produced a compound manœuvre that for deceptiveness, secrecy, and rapidity was worthy of Marlborough, and in consequence gained a cheap and decisive victory over the allies at Denain. This completed the disintegration of the coalition, and Louis was able to gain a peace very different from what would have been his lot before Malplaquet. One direct approach had, by its vain cost, done much to undo the aggregate advantage which indirect approaches alone had built up. And it is not the least significant feature that the issue was finally settled, in the reverse way, by yet another example of the indirect approach.

Although the allies had forfeited their primary object of preventing Louis XIV's practical union of France and Spain, England came out of the war with a territorial profit. This owed much to the fact that Marlborough's vision stretched beyond the limits of his own theatre of war. As a military distraction and a political asset, he had combined long-range operations in the Mediterranean with his own in Flanders. The expeditions of 1702 and 1703 helped to subtract Portugal and Savoy from the enemy's balance and paved the way for a move against their greater asset, Spain. The next move, in 1704, gained Gibraltar. Then

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Peterborough in Spain ably fulfilled a distracting role, and in 1708 another expedition took Minorca. If later operations in Spain were mishandled, and less fortunate in result, England came out of the war in possession of Gibraltar and Minorca, two keys to the command of the Mediterranean, as well as of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland in the North Atlantic.

Frederick's Wars

The indecisive results of the war of the Austrian Succession, 1740–48, cannot be better illustrated than in the fact that the most militarily successful nation—the French—merely gleaned from it the phrase ‘you are as stupid as the Peace’ to hurl at fellow-citizens who were objects of dislike. Frederick the Great was the one ruler to profit, or profiteer. He gained Silesia early and then retired from the competition. Although he came in again later, he risked much without gaining more, except the right to embroider some illustrious victories on his colours. The war, however, established the prestige of Prussia as a great power.

The events which decided the cession of Silesia to Prussia, by the early peace of Breslau in 1742, deserve notice. At the opening of that year, the prospect seemed to be fading. A combined advance by the French and Prussians upon the Austrian main army had been arranged. But the French were soon brought to a standstill. Then Frederick, instead of continuing westwards to unite with his ally, suddenly turned southwards towards Vienna. Although his advanced troops appeared before the enemy capital, he quickly fell back—for the enemy army was marching to cut him off from his base. This advance of Frederick's has usually been denounced as a mere and rash demonstration; yet in view of its sequel the charge may per-

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haps be harsh. For his rapid retreat, an apparent *sauve qui peut*, drew the Austrians in pursuit of him far into Silesia—where, turning at bay, he inflicted a sharp reverse, exploiting it by a vigorous pursuit. Only three weeks later, Austria made a separate peace with Frederick, by which Silesia was ceded. It may be unwise to draw strong deductions from this event, yet it is at least significant that this sudden disposition to a peace of sacrifice should have followed the one indirect approach of the war in this theatre—even though it comprised but a mere appearance before Vienna and a small tactical victory, wrested apparently from the jaws of defeat and far less spectacular than many of Frederick's other victories.

If the war of the Austrian Succession was indecisive in its general results, the other and succeeding major war of the mid-eighteenth was no better—from the standpoint of European policy. The one country that achieved results which decisively affected the course of European history was England. And England was not only an indirect participant in the Seven Years' War (1756–63), but made her contribution and took her profits indirectly. While the armies of Europe were exhausting themselves and their states in direct action, small detachments from England were turning this weakness to advantage by acquiring the British Empire. Moreover, the fact that Prussia, when on the verge of exhaustion, obtained a peace of indecision instead of humiliation, was as much due to the indirect dislocation of the offensive power of France through her colonial disasters, as it was to the abandonment of Russia's intended *coup de grâce* to Prussia through the death of the Tsaritsa. Fate was merciful to Frederick the Great: by 1762 his long string of brilliant victories in battle had left him almost stripped of resources and incapable of further resistance.

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Only one campaign between European forces in this long series can truly be termed decisive either in its military or political results—the campaign which ended in the English capture of Quebec. And that was not only the briefest, but waged in a secondary theatre. As the capture of Quebec and the overthrow of the French dominion in Canada was made possible by the capacity for grand-strategic indirect approach contained in sea-power, so the actual military course of the campaign was decided by a strategic indirect approach. The result is the more suggestive because this apparently hazardous indirect approach was only undertaken after the direct approach on the line of the Montmorency had failed with serious loss of lives and, still more, of morale. In justice to Wolfe, it must be pointed out that he only resigned himself to this direct approach after various baits—the bombardment of Quebec, as well as the exposure of isolated detachments at Point Levis and near the Montmorency Falls—had failed to lure the French from their strong position. But in the failure of these, compared with the success of his final hazardous landing on the French rear above Quebec, there is a lesson. To *entice* the enemy out was not enough; it was necessary to *draw* him out. So also there is a lesson in the failure of the feints by which Wolfe tried to prepare his direct approach. To *mystify* the enemy was not enough; he must be *distracted*—a term which implies combining deception of the enemy's mind with deprivation of his freedom to move for counter-action, and the distension of his forces.

Gambler's last throw as Wolfe's ultimate move seemed on the surface, all these conditions were fulfilled—and the result was victory. Even so, to those who habitually study military history in terms of armed force, the degree of dislocation caused in the

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French forces would not seem to warrant the measure of their collapse. Numerous theses have been written to show what the French might have done, and how they might well have repaired their situation. But Quebec is an illuminating example of the truth that a decision is produced even more by the mental and moral dislocation of the command than by the physical dislocation of its forces. And these effects transcend the geographical and statistical calculations which fill nine-tenths of the normal book on military history.

If, as history shows, the main European channel of the Seven Years' War was so indeterminate in its course, despite so many tactical victories, it is worth while to inquire into the cause. While the number of Frederick's foes is the usual explanation, the sum of his advantages is a counterbalance so strong as to make the explanation not altogether adequate. We need to probe deeper.

Like Alexander and Napoleon, and unlike Marlborough, he was free from the responsibility and limitations which are imposed on a strategist in the strict sense of the word. He combined in his person the functions of strategy and grand strategy. Moreover, the permanent association between him, as king, and his army enabled him to prepare and develop his means for the end which he chose. The comparative scarcity of fortresses in his theatres of war was another advantage.

Although faced by the coalition of Austria, France, Russia, Sweden, and Saxony, with England as his only ally, Frederick had at the outset, and until midway through the second campaign, a superiority in the actual forces available. In addition, he had the two great assets of a tactical instrument superior to any of his enemies, and of a central position.

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This enabled him to practise what is commonly called the strategy of 'interior lines', striking outwards from his central pivot against one of the forces on the circumference, and utilizing the shorter distance he had thus to travel to concentrate against one of the enemy forces before it could be supported by the others. Ostensibly, it would seem that the further apart these enemy forces, the easier it must be to achieve a decisive success. In terms of time, space, and number, this is undoubtedly true. But once more the moral element intrudes. When the enemy forces are widely separated each is self-contained and tends to be consolidated by pressure. When they are close together they tend to coalesce and 'become members one of another', mutually dependent in mind, morale, and matter. The minds of the commanders affect each other, moral impressions are quickly transfused, and even the movements of each force easily hinder or disorganize those of the others. Thus while the antagonist has less time and space for his action, the dislocating results of it take effect more quickly and easily. Further, when forces are close together the enemy's mere divergence from his approach to one of them may become an unexpected, and therefore truly indirect approach to another. In contrast, when forces are widely separated there is more time to prepare to meet, or avoid, the second blow of the army which is exploiting its central position.

The use of 'interior lines' as Marlborough used them in his march to the Danube is a form of the indirect approach. But although it is an indirect approach in relation to the enemy forces as a whole, it is not so in relation to the force that is the actual target, unless this is taken unaware. Otherwise the move needs to be completed by a further indirect approach—to the objective itself.

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Frederick consistently used his central position to concentrate against one fraction of the enemy, and he always employed tactics of indirect approach. Thereby he gained many victories. But his tactical indirect approach was geometrical rather than psychological—unprepared by the subtler forms of surprise favoured by Scipio—and for all their executive skill, these manœuvres were narrow. The opponent might be unable to meet the following blow, owing to the rigidity of his mind or his formations, but the blow itself did not fall unexpectedly.

The war opened at the end of August 1756 with Frederick's invasion of Saxony to forestall the plans of the Coalition. Profiting by initial surprise, Frederick entered Dresden almost unopposed. When an Austrian army came belatedly to the rescue, he advanced up the Elbe to meet it and, repulsing it in a battle near Leuthen, assured his occupation of Saxony. In April 1757, he crossed the mountains into Bohemia and marched on Prague. On arrival, he found the Austrian army posted in a strong position on the heights behind the river. Thereupon, leaving a detachment to mask his movement and watch the fords, he marched upstream during the night, crossed the river, and advanced against the enemy's right. Although his approach began in an indirect way, it became direct before the manœuvre was complete—for the Austrian army had time to change front, so that the Prussian infantry found themselves attempting a frontal assault across a fire-swept glacis. They fell in thousands. Only the unexpected arrival of Zeiten's cavalry, which had been sent on a wide detour, turned the scales of battle and produced the retreat of the Austrians.

The subsequent siege of Prague was interrupted by the advance, to the city's relief, of a fresh Austrian army under Daun. When word came of its approach,

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Frederick took as much of his force as he could spare from the siege and moved to meet Daun. When he encountered the Austrian army at Kolin on the 18th of June, he found it strongly entrenched, and also nearly twice as strong as his own. Once more, he attempted a move past its right flank, but the manœuvre was so narrow that his columns, galled by the fire of the enemy's light troops, were drawn off their course into a direct and disjointed attack—which ended in disastrous defeat. Frederick was forced to give up the siege of Prague, and then to evacuate Bohemia.

Meantime the Russians had invaded East Prussia, and a French army had overrun Hanover, while a mixed army of the allies, under Hildburghausen, was threatening to march on Berlin from the west. To prevent the junction of the last two armies, Frederick made a hurried march back through Leipzig, and succeeded in checking the menace. But he was then called away by fresh danger in Silesia, and while he was on his way thither an Austrian raiding force entered and sacked Berlin. This force had hardly been chased away before Hildburghausen again began to advance, and Frederick raced to meet him. In the battle of Rossbach that followed, the Allied army, twice Frederick's strength, tried to copy Frederick's characteristic manœuvre and turn it against him. Not only did the narrowness of the manœuvre give him ample warning, but the allies' hasty assumption that he was retreating led them to 'distract' their own forces in order to catch him up—so that when he counter-manœuvred, not to face them, but to fall on their far flank, they were almost instantaneously dislocated. Thus here, through his opponents' bungling, Frederick achieved a real indirect approach of surprise, not merely of mobility. And this was by far the most economical of all his victories, for at the price of only

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500 casualties he inflicted 7,700 and dispersed an army of 64,000.

Unhappily for him, he had drained his strength too low in the previous battles to reap the full benefit. He had still to deal with the Austrian army that he had failed to break up at Prague and Kolin, and although he succeeded at Leuthen, the victory there won by his famous oblique advance—a brilliantly executed if rather obvious indirect approach—cost him more than he could afford.

Thus the war continued, with the prospect dimmer, in 1758. Frederick began by a real indirect approach against the Austrians, marching right across their front and past their flank to Olmütz, twenty miles into enemy territory. Even when he lost an important convoy of supplies, he did not fall back, but instead continued his march through Bohemia right round the Austrian rear and into their entrenched base at Königgrätz. But he had now once more to pay forfeit for the opportunities lost at Prague and Kolin, for the Russian 'steam-roller' had at last got up steam and had rolled forward to Posen, on the road to Berlin. Frederick decided that he must forgo the completion of his Bohemian campaign and march north to stop the Russians. He succeeded, but the battle of Zorndorf was another Prague. Once again Frederick circumvented the obstacle offered by the Russians' strong position, marching right round their eastern flank in order to strike them from the rear. But once again the defender was able to achieve a change of front, and convert Frederick's indirect approach into a frontal attack. This had brought him into grave difficulties before his cavalry commander, Seydlitz, intervened by a circling stroke against the enemy's new flank across ground that had been deemed impassable—thus giving his manœuvre an unexpectedness which made

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it, in effect, a truly indirect approach. But Frederick's losses, if somewhat lighter than the Russians', were the heavier in comparison with his resources.

With his human capital still more reduced he had to leave the Russians to recuperate and move back against the Austrians—to suffer at Höchkirch, not only a further reduction but a defeat, through undue confidence that his old Austrian opponent, Daun, would never take the initiative. Thus Frederick was surprised in a double sense; surrounded by night, he was only saved from destruction through Zeiten's cavalry keeping a passage open for his retreat. So, on the war went in 1759, with Frederick's strength declining. At Kunersdorf he suffered the worst defeat of his career, from the Russians, and at Maxen another from Daun—again due to misplaced confidence. Henceforth he could do no more than passively block the enemy.

But while the fortunes of Prussia were sinking into twilight the sun was shining in Canada. Wolfe's progress there encouraged England to send troops directly to Germany, and by a victory over the French at Minden, these offset Frederick's own disasters.

Nevertheless, his weakness was more marked than ever in 1760. He gained a respite from the pressure in the east by the ruse of letting the Russians capture a dispatch worded 'Austrians totally defeated to-day, now for the Russians. Do what we agreed upon.' But although the Russians promptly acted upon this gentle hint, and retired, the 'posthumous' defeat of the Austrians at Torgau subsequently was another Pyrrhic victory for Frederick. Paralysed by his own losses, with only 60,000 men left in all, he could not venture another battle and was even shut up in Silesia, cut off from Prussia. Fortunately, the Austrian army's strategy was as nerveless as ever, while the Russian army's

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rear services broke down with the consistency that always marked them. And at this lingering crisis the Tsaritsa died. Her successor not only made peace, but began to contemplate aiding Frederick. For a few months, France and Austria continued a desultory war, but the former's strength was undermined by her colonial disasters, and, with Austria now not only inert but weary, peace was soon arranged—leaving all the warring countries exhausted, and none, except England, better off for the seven years' exuberant bloodshed.

If many lessons are to be culled from Frederick's campaigns, the main one would appear to be, in brief, that his indirectness was too direct. Or, to express it in another way, that he regarded the indirect approach as a matter of pure mobility, instead of a combination of mobility and surprise. Thus, despite all his brilliance, his economy of force broke down.

Chapter VIII

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION AND NAPOLEON BONAPARTE

Thirty years pass and the curtain rises on 'The Great War' that was illumined by the genius of Napoleon Bonaparte. As had been the case a century before, France was the menace against which the powers of Europe banded themselves. But this time the course of the struggle was different. Revolutionary France had many sympathizers, but they did not form the governments of the nations, nor did they control the armed forces of their states. Yet, beginning the war alone, forcibly isolated as if infected by the plague, she not only repulsed the combined effort to smother her, but, changing in nature, became an expanding military menace to the rest of Europe, and ultimately, the military master of most of it. The clue to her achievement of such power lies partly in natural, partly in personal, conditions. The former sprang from the national and revolutionary spirit which inspired the citizen armies of France, and in compensation for the precise drill which it made impossible, gave rein instead to the tactical sense and initiative of the individual. These new tactics of fluidity had for their simple, yet vital pivot, the fact that the French now marched and fought at a quick step of 120 paces

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to the minute, while their opponents adhered to the orthodox 70 paces. This elementary difference, in days before mechanical science endowed armies with means of movement swifter than the human leg, was one factor in making possible the rapid transference and reshuffled concentrations of striking power whereby the French could in Napoleon's phrase, multiply 'mass by velocity' both strategically and tactically.

A second natural condition was the organization of the army into permanent divisions—the fractioning of the army into self-contained and separately acting parts. Initiated by de Broglie, the reform had taken effect even before the Revolution. But then Carnot initiated and Bonaparte developed the idea that these divisions while operating separately should co-operate to a common goal.

A third condition, linked with this, was that the chaotic supply system and the undisciplined nature of the Revolutionary armies compelled a reversion to the old practice of 'living on the country'. And the distribution of the army in divisions meant that this practice detracted less from the army's effectiveness than in old days. Where, formerly, the fractions had to be collected before they could carry out an operation, now they could be serving a military purpose while feeding themselves.

Moreover, the effect of 'moving light' was to accelerate their mobility, and enable them to move freely in mountainous or forest country. Similarly, the very fact that they were unable to depend on magazines and supply-trains for food and equipment lent impetus to hungry and ill-clad troops in descending upon the rear of an enemy who had, and depended on, such direct forms of supply.

The personal conditions centred round the genius of a leader—Napoleon Bonaparte—whose military abil-

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ity was stimulated by study of military history and, even more, by the food for thought provided in the theories of the two most outstanding and original military writers of the eighteenth century—Bourcet and Guibert. From Bourcet he learnt the principle of calculated dispersion to induce the enemy to disperse their own concentration preparatory to the swift reuniting of his own forces. Also, the value of a 'plan with several branches', and of operating on a line which threatened alternative objectives. Moreover, the very plan which Napoleon executed in his first campaign was based on one that Bourcet had designed half a century earlier. From Guibert he acquired an idea of the supreme value of mobility and fluidity of force, and of the potentialities inherent in the new distribution of an army in self-contained divisions. Guibert had defined the Napoleonic method when he wrote, a generation earlier: 'The art is to extend forces without exposing them, to embrace the enemy without being disunited, to link up the moves or the attacks to take the enemy in flank without exposing one's own flank.' And Guibert's prescription for the rear attack, as the means of upsetting the enemy's balance, became Napoleon's practice. To the same source can be traced Napoleon's method of concentrating his mobile artillery to shatter, and make a breach at, a key point in the enemy's front. Moreover, it was the practical reforms achieved by Guibert in the French army shortly before the Revolution which fashioned the instrument that Napoleon applied. Above all, it was Guibert's vision of a coming revolution in warfare, carried out by a man who would arise from a revolutionary state, that kindled the youthful Napoleon's imagination and ambition.

While he added little to the ideas he had imbibed, he gave them fulfilment. Without his dynamic applica-

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tion, the new mobility might have remained merely a theory. Because his education coincided with his instincts, and because these in turn were given scope by his circumstances, he was able to exploit the full possibilities of the new 'divisional' system. In developing the wider range of strategic combinations thus possible, lay Napoleon's chief contribution to strategy.

The amazement caused by the discomfiture, at Valmy and Jemappes, of the first partial invasion of 1792 has tended to obscure the fact that France and the Revolution were in far greater danger subsequently. For it was only after the execution of Louis XVI that the First Coalition was formed—by England, Holland, Austria, Prussia, Spain, and Sardinia—and only then that determination of spirit and resources of men and material were thrown into the scales. If the conduct of the war by the invaders lacked purposeful and skilful direction, the situation of the French grew more and more precarious until fortune changed dramatically in 1794 and the tide of invasion flowed back. Henceforth, from being the resisting party, France became the aggressor. What caused this ebb? Certainly no strategic master-stroke; but though the aim was vague and limited, the significance of the event is that the decision sprang from a strategic approach that was definitely indirect.

While the main armies were pitting themselves against each other near Lille, with much bloodshed but no finality, Jourdan's far-distant army of the Moselle was ordered to assemble a striking force on its left for an advance westwards through the Ardennes, to operate towards Liège and Namur. Reaching Namur after a hungry march, during which his troops had lived on such supplies as they could pick up from the countryside, Jourdan heard—by message

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and the distant sound of gun-fire—that the right wing of the main army was engaged unsuccessfully in front of Charleroi. So, instead of laying formal siege to Namur, he moved south-westwards towards Charleroi and the rear flank of the enemy. His arrival intimidated the fortress into surrender.

Jourdan seems to have had no wider object in view, but the innate psychological 'pull' of such a move on to the enemy's rear gave him what Napoleon and other great captains sought as a calculated result. Coburg, the enemy commander-in-chief, hurried back eastwards, collecting such troops as he could on his way. He threw them into an attack upon Jourdan, who was entrenched to cover Charleroi. Although the struggle, famous as the battle of Fleurus, was severe, the French had the inestimable advantage of having strategically dislocated the enemy and having drawn him to attack with a fraction of his strength. The defeat of this fraction was followed by the general retreat of the allies.

When the French, in turn, assumed the role of invaders, they failed, despite their superior numbers, to achieve any decisive results in the main campaign across the Rhine. Indeed the campaign was, in the end, not merely blank, but blasted—and by an indirect approach. In July 1796, the Archduke Charles, faced by the renewed advance of the two superior armies of Jourdan and Moreau, decided, in his own words, 'to retire both armies (his own and Wartensleben's) step by step without committing himself to a battle, and to seize the first opportunity to unite them, so as to throw himself with superior, or at least equal, strength on one of the two hostile armies'. But the enemy's pressure gave him no chance to practise this 'interior lines' strategy—direct in aim, save for the idea of yielding ground to gain an opportunity—until a

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French change of direction suggested a more audacious stroke. It was due to the initiative of a cavalry brigadier, Nauendorff, whose wide reconnaissance showed him that the French were diverging from the Archduke's front to converge on and destroy Wartensleben. He sent the inspired message: 'If your Royal Highness will or can advance 12,000 men against Jourdan's rear, he is lost.' If the Archduke's execution was not as bold as his subordinate's conception, it was sufficient to bring about the collapse of the French offensive. The disorderly retreat of Jourdan's shattered army back to and over the Rhine, compelled Moreau to relinquish his successful progress in Bavaria and fall back similarly.

But while the main French effort on the Rhine failed, and failed afresh later, the decision came from a secondary theatre, Italy—where Bonaparte succeeded in converting a precarious defensive into a decisive indirect approach to a victorious issue. The plan was already in his mind two years before, when he had been a staff-officer in this zone, and subsequently in Paris it had taken definite form. Just as the plan itself was a reproduction of the 1745 plan, improved by application of the lessons of that campaign, so Bonaparte's key ideas had been moulded by the masters who had guided his military studies during his most impressionable years. That period of study was brief—he was only twenty-four when, as Captain Bonaparte, he was given command of the artillery at the siege of Toulon, and only twenty-six when he was made commander-in-chief of the 'Army of Italy'. If he had packed much reading and thinking into a few years, he had little leisure for reflection thereafter. Dynamic rather than deep-thinking, he did not evolve any clear philosophy of war. And his working theory, so far as it found expression in his writings, was rather

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a patchwork quilt—lending itself to misinterpretation by subsequent generations of soldiers who have hung upon his words.

This tendency, as well as the natural effect of his early experience, is illustrated in one of the most significant and oft-quoted of his sayings—‘The principles of war are the same as those of a siege. Fire must be concentrated on one point, and as soon as the breach is made, the equilibrium is broken and the rest is nothing.’ Subsequent military theory has put the accent on the first clause instead of on the last ; in particular, on the words ‘one point’ instead of on the word ‘equilibrium’. The former is but a physical metaphor, whereas the latter expresses the actual psychological result which ensures ‘that the rest is nothing’. His own emphasis can be traced in the strategic course of his campaigns.

The word ‘point’ even, has been the source of much confusion, and more controversy. One school argues that Napoleon meant that the concentrated blow must be aimed at the enemy’s strongest point, on the ground that this, and this only, ensures decisive results. For if the enemy’s main resistance be broken, its rupture will involve that of any lesser opposition. This argument ignores the factor of cost, and the fact that the victor may be too exhausted to exploit his success—so that even a weaker opponent may acquire a relatively higher resisting power than the original. The other school, better imbued with the idea of economy of force, but only in the limited sense of first costs, contends that the offensive should be aimed at the enemy’s weakest point. But where a point is obviously weak this is usually because it is remote from any vital artery or nerve centre, or because it is deliberately left weak to draw the assailant into a trap.

Here, again, illumination comes from the actual

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campaign in which Bonaparte put this maxim into execution. It clearly suggests that what he really meant was not 'point', but 'joint'—and that at this stage of his career he was too firmly imbued with the idea of economy of force to waste his limited strength in battering at the enemy's strong point. A joint, however, is both vital and vulnerable.

It was at this time, too, that Bonaparte used another phrase that has subsequently been quoted to justify the most foolhardy concentrations of effort against the main armed forces of the enemy. 'Austria is our most determined enemy. . . . Austria overthrown, Spain and Italy fall of themselves. We must not disperse our attacks but concentrate them.' But the full text of the memorandum containing this phrase shows that he was arguing, not in support of the direct attack upon Austria, but for using the army on the frontier of Piedmont for an indirect approach to Austria. In his conception, northern Italy was to be the corridor to Austria. And in this secondary theatre, his aim—following Bourcet's guidance—was to knock out the junior partner, Piedmont, before dealing with the senior partner. In execution, his approach became still more indirect, and acquired a subtler form. For contact with reality shattered the dream which, after his initial success, he communicated to his government—'In less than a month I hope to be on the mountains of Tirol, there to meet the army of the Rhine, and with it to carry the war into Bavaria.' It was through the frustration of this project that his real opportunity developed. By drawing Austria's forces into offensives against him in Italy, and defeating them there, he gained, twelve months later, an open road into Austria.

When Bonaparte assumed command of the 'Army of Italy', in March 1796, its troops were spread out

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along the Genoese Riviera, while the allied Austrian and Piedmont forces held the mountain passes into the plains beyond. Bonaparte's plan was to make two converging thrusts across the mountains at the fortress of Ceva, and having gained this gateway into Piedmont, to frighten her government into a separate peace by the threat of his advance on Turin. He hoped that the Austrian forces would be still in their winter quarters—although if they should move to join their allies he had in mind a feint towards Acqui to make them withdraw in a divergent, north-easterly direction.

But in the event it was by fortune rather than design that Bonaparte gained the initial advantage of separating the two armies. The opportunity was created by an offensive move on the part of the Austrians—who made a bound forward to threaten Bonaparte's right flank and forestall any French advance on Genoa. Bonaparte countered this threat by a short-arm jab towards the joint of the Austrian advance—though two more jabs at a neighbouring point were needed before the Austrians accepted the repulse and fell back on Acqui. Meantime, the bulk of the French army was advancing on Ceva. Bonaparte's rash attempt, on the 16th of April, to take the position by direct assault was a failure. He then planned an encircling manœuvre for the 18th, and also changed his line of communications to a route further removed from possible Austrian interference. The Piedmontese, however, withdrew from the fortress before the new attack developed. In following them up, Bonaparte suffered another expensive repulse when he tried another direct assault, on a position where the Piedmontese had chosen to make a stand. But at the next time of asking both their flanks were turned, and they were hustled back into the plains. In the eyes of the Piedmontese government, the threat to Turin from the oncoming

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French now loomed much larger than the Austrians' belated promise to march to their aid, by a necessarily roundabout route. The 'equilibrium was broken', and its psychological effect dispensed with any need for physical defeat to make the Piedmontese appeal for an armistice—which removed them from the scales of the war.

No commander's first campaign could have been better suited to impress him with the vital importance of the time factor—all the more because it would seem that if the Piedmontese had held out even a few days longer Bonaparte might, for want of supplies, have been obliged to retreat back to the Riviera. Whether this reported admission of his be true or not, the impression made on him is shown in his remark at the time—'It may be that in future I may lose a battle, but I shall never lose a minute.'

He was now superior to the Austrians alone (35,000 to 25,000). Did he advance directly upon them? No. The day after the armistice with Piedmont had been settled, he took Milan as his objective; but Tortona to Piacenza was his indirect way thither—or, rather, on to its rear. After deceiving the Austrians into a concentration at Valenza to oppose his expected north-eastward advance, he marched east instead, along the south bank of the Po, and so, on reaching Piacenza, he had turned all the Austrians' possible lines of resistance.

To gain this advantage he had not scrupled to violate the neutrality of the Duchy of Parma, in whose territory Piacenza lay, calculating that he might there find boats and a ferry—to compensate his lack of a proper bridging train. But this disregard for neutral rights had an ironically retributive effect. For when Bonaparte swung north against the Austrians' rear flank the latter decided to retire without loss of time

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through an intervening strip of Venetian territory—thus saving themselves by following his example of disrespect for the rules of war. Before he could use the Adda as a river-barrier across their line of retreat, the Austrians had slipped out of his reach, to gain the shelter of Mantua and the famous Quadrilateral of fortresses. In face of these stubborn realities, Bonaparte's vision of invading Austria within a month became a distant vista. And increasingly distant, because the Directory, growing anxious over the risks of the move and its own straitened resources, ordered him to march down to Leghorn, and 'evacuate' the four neutral states on the way—which meant, in the language of the time, to plunder their resources. In that process Italy was despoiled to such an extent that it never recovered its former state of prosperity.

From a military point of view, however, this restriction of Bonaparte's freedom of action proved the proverbial 'blessing in disguise'. For by compelling him to delay the pursuit of his dreams, it enabled him, with the enemy's assistance, to adjust his end to his means—until the balance of forces had turned far enough to bring his original end within practicable reach. To quote the judgement of Ferrero, the great Italian historian :

'For a century the first campaign in Italy has been described—I am almost tempted to say, sung—as a triumphant epic of offensive movements, according to which Bonaparte conquered Italy so easily because he followed up attack with attack, with a boldness that was equal to his good luck. But when the history of the campaign is studied impartially, it is clear that the two enemies attacked, or were attacked alternately, and that in the majority of cases the attacker failed.'

More by force of circumstances than by Bonaparte's design, Mantua became a bait to draw successive Aus-

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trian relieving forces far from their bases, and into his jaws. It is significant, however, that he did not entrench himself in a covering position after the custom of the traditional general, but kept his forces mobile, disposed in a loose and wide-flung grouping which could be concentrated in any direction.

In face of the first Austrian attempt at relief, Bonaparte's method was imperilled by his own reluctance to give up the investment of Mantua, and only when he cut loose this anchor was he able to use his mobility to overthrow the Austrians, at Castiglione. He was now ordered by the Directory to advance through the Tyrol and co-operate with the main Rhine army. The Austrians profited by this direct advance on his part to slip away eastwards with the bulk of their force, through the Val Sugana, down into the Venetian plain, and then westwards to relieve Mantua. But Bonaparte, instead of pursuing his advance north, or falling back to guard Mantua, turned in hot chase of their tail through the mountains, thereby retorting to the enemy's indirect approach with one of his own—but with a more decisive aim than theirs. At Bassano, he caught and crushed the rear half of their army. And when he emerged into the Venetian plain in pursuit of the other half, he directed the pursuers to cut the enemy off from Trieste and their line of retreat to Austria, not to head them off from Mantua. Thus they became a fresh addition to his Mantuan safe-deposit.

The locking up of so much of her military capital drove Austria to a fresh expenditure. This time, and not for the last time, the directness of Bonaparte's tactics imperilled the successful indirectness of his strategy. When the converging armies of Alvintzi and Davidovich drew near to Verona, his pivot for the guarding of Mantua, Bonaparte hurled himself at the former, the stronger, and suffered a severe repulse—

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at Caldiero. But instead of retreating, he chose the daring course of a wide manœuvre round the southern flank of Alvintzi's army and on to its rear. How desperate he felt was shown in the letter he wrote to warn the Directory—'The weakness and exhaustion of the army cause me to fear the worst. We are perhaps on the eve of losing Italy.' The delays caused by marshes and water-courses increased the hazard of his manœuvre, but it upset the enemy's plan of closing their jaws on his army, supposed to be at Verona. While Alvintzi wheeled to meet him, Davidovich remained inactive. Even so, Bonaparte found it hard to overcome Alvintzi's superior numbers. But when the scales of battle were hanging in the balance at Arcola, Bonaparte resorted to a tactical ruse, a device rare for him—sending a few trumpeters on to the Austrian rear to sound the charge. Within a few minutes the Austrian troops were streaming away in flight.

Two months later, in January 1797, the Austrians made a fourth and last attempt to save Mantua, but this was shattered at Rivoli—where Bonaparte's loose group formation functioned almost perfectly. Like a widespread net whose corners are weighted with stones, when one of the enemy's columns impinged on it the net closed in round the point of pressure and the stones crashed together on the intruder. This self-protective formation which thus, on impact, became a concentrated offensive formation, was Bonaparte's development of the new divisional system—by which an army was permanently sub-divided into independently moving fractions, instead of, as formerly, constituting a single body from which only temporary detachments were made. The group formation of Bonaparte's Italian campaigns became the more highly developed *bataillon carré*, with army corps replacing divisions, of his later wars. Although at Rivoli this loaded net was

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the means of crushing the Austrians' manœuvring wing, it is significant to note that the collapse of their main resistance came from Bonaparte's audacity in sending a single regiment of 2,000 men across Lake Garda, in boats, to place themselves on the line of retreat of a whole army. Mantua then surrendered, and the Austrians—who had lost their armies in the effort to save this outer gate to their country—had now to watch, helplessly, Bonaparte's swift approach to the defenceless inner gate. This threat wrung peace from Austria while the main French armies were still but a few miles beyond the Rhine.

In the autumn of 1798, the Second Coalition was formed by Russia, Austria, England, Turkey, Portugal, Naples, and the Papacy—to cast off the shackles of this peace treaty. Bonaparte was away in Egypt, and when he returned the fortunes of France had sunk low. The field armies were greatly depleted, the treasury was empty, and the conscript levies were falling off. Bonaparte, who on his return had overthrown the Directory and become First Consul, ordered the formation at Dijon of an Army of Reserve, composed of all the home troops that could be scraped together. But he did not use it to reinforce the main theatre of war, and the main army on the Rhine. Instead, he planned the boldest of all his indirect approaches—a swoop along an immense arc on to the rear of the Austrian army in Italy. This had driven the small French 'Army of Italy' back almost to the French frontier and penned it into the north-west corner of Italy. Bonaparte had intended to move through Switzerland, to Lucerne or Zurich, and then to descend into Italy as far east as the Saint Gothard pass, or even the Tyrol. But the news that the Army of Italy was hard pressed led him to take the shorter route by the Saint Bernard pass. Thus, when he debouched

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from the Alps at Ivrea, in the last week of May 1800, he was still on the right front of the Austrian army. Instead of pressing south-east direct to the aid of Masséna, who was shut up in Genoa, Bonaparte sent his advanced guard due south to Cherasco, while, under cover of this distraction, he slipped eastward to Milan with the main body. Thus, instead of advancing to meet the enemy in what he termed 'their natural position', facing west of Alessandria, he gained a 'natural position' across the Austrians' rear—forming that strategic back-stop, or barrage, which was the initial objective of his deadliest manœuvres against the enemy's rear. For such a position, offering natural obstacles, afforded him a secure pivot from which to prepare a stranglehold for the enemy, whose instinctive tendency, when cut off from their line of retreat and supply, was to turn and flow back, usually in dribbles, towards him. This conception of a strategic barrage was Bonaparte's chief contribution to the strategy of indirect approach.

At Milan he had barred one of the two Austrian routes of retreat, and now, extending his barrage south of the Po to the Stradella defile, he also blocked the other. But here, for the moment, his conception had somewhat outranged his means—for he had only 34,000 men, and owing to Moreau's reluctance, the corps of 15,000 that Bonaparte had ordered the Army of the Rhine to send over the Saint Gothard pass was late in arriving. Concern over the thinness of his barrage became accentuated. And at this juncture Genoa capitulated, thereby removing his 'fixative' agent. Uncertainty as to the route the Austrians might now take, and the fear that they might retire to Genoa, where the British navy could revictual them, led him to forfeit much of the advantage he had gained. For, crediting his opponents with more initiative than they pos-

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sessed, he quitted his 'natural position' at the Stradella and pushed westward to reconnoitre them, sending Desaix with a division to cut the road from Alessandria to Genoa. Thus he was caught at a disadvantage, with only part of his army at hand, when the Austrian army suddenly emerged from Alessandria and advanced to meet him on the plains of Marengo (the 14th of June 1800). The battle was long in doubt, and even when Desaix's detachment returned the Austrians were only driven back. But then Bonaparte's strategic position became the lever which enabled him to wring from the demoralized Austrian commander an agreement that the Austrians were to evacuate Lombardy and retire behind the Mincio. Although the war was resumed in a desultory fashion beyond the Mincio, the moral repercussion of Marengo was manifested in the armistice which closed the war of the Second Coalition six months later.

After several years of uneasy peace, the curtain that had fallen on the French Revolutionary Wars rose on a new act—the Napoleonic wars. In 1805, Napoleon's army of 200,000 men was assembled at Boulogne, menacing a descent on the English coast, when it was suddenly directed by forced marches to the Rhine. It is still uncertain whether Napoleon seriously intended a direct invasion of England, or whether his threat was merely the first move in his indirect approach to Austria. Probably, he was acting on Bournet's principle of 'a plan with branches'. When he decided to take the eastward branch, he calculated that the Austrians would, as usual, send an army into Bavaria to block the exits of the Black Forest. On this basis he planned his wide manœuvre round their northern flank, across the Danube, and on to the Lech—his intended strategic barrage across their rear. It was a repetition, on a grander scale, of the Stra-

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dellá manœuvre—and Napoleon himself emphasized the parallel to his troops. Moreover, his superiority of force enabled him, once the barrage was established, to convert it into a moving barrage. This, closing down on the rear of the Austrian army, led to its almost bloodless surrender at Ulm.

Having wiped out the weaker partner, Napoleon had now to deal with the Russian army, under Kutsof. This, after traversing Austria and gathering smaller Austrian contingents, had just reached the Inn. A less immediate threat was the return of the other Austrian armies from Italy and the Tyrol. The size of his forces was now, for the first but not the last time, an inconvenience to Napoleon. With such large armies, the space between the Danube and the mountains to the south-west was too cramped for any local indirect approach to the enemy, and there was not time for a wide movement of the range of the Ulm manœuvre. But so long as the Russians remained on the Inn, they were in a 'natural position'—forming not only a shield to Austrian territory, but a shield under cover of which the other Austrian armies could come up from the south, through Carinthia, and join them in presenting Napoleon with a solid wall of resistance.

Faced with this problem, Napoleon used a most subtle series of variations of the indirect approach. His first aim was to push the Russians as far east as possible, so as to separate them from the Austrian armies now returning from Italy. So, while advancing directly east towards Kutsof and Vienna, he sent Mortier's corps along the north bank of the Danube. This threat to Kutsof's communications with Russia was sufficient to induce him to fall back obliquely north-eastwards, to Krems on the Danube. Napoleon thereupon dispatched Murat on a dash across Kuto-

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sov's new front, with Vienna as his goal. From Vienna, Murat was directed northwards on Hollabrunn. Thus, after first threatening the Russians' right flank, Napoleon now menaced their left rear. Owing to Murat's mistaken agreement to a temporary truce, this move failed to cut off the Russians, but it at least drove them into a hurried retreat still further north-east to Olmütz, within close reach of their own frontier. Although they were now separated from the Austrian reinforcements, they were nearer to their own, and at Olmütz they actually received a large instalment. To press them further back would only consolidate their strength. Besides, time pressed, and the entry of Prussia into the war was imminent.

Hence Napoleon resorted to the indirect approach of tempting the Russians into taking the offensive by a subtle display of his own apparent weakness. To face the 80,000 men of the enemy army, he concentrated only 50,000 at Brünn, and thence pushed out isolated detachments towards Olmütz. This impression of weakness he supplemented by 'doves of peace' to the Tsar and the Austrian emperor. When the enemy swallowed the bait, Napoleon recoiled before them to a position at Austerlitz, designed by nature to fit his trap. And in the battle which followed he used one of his rare examples of the tactical indirect approach to offset his equally rare inferiority of numbers on the battlefield. Luring the enemy to stretch their left in an attack on his line of retreat, he swung round his centre against the weakened 'joint' and thereby obtained a victory so decisive that within twenty-four hours the Emperor of Austria asked for peace.

When, a few months later, Napoleon turned to deal with Prussia, he had a superiority of almost two to one available; an army that was 'grand' both in quantity and quality against one that was defective in training

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and obsolete in outlook. The effect of this assured superiority on Napoleon's strategy was marked, and had a growing influence on the conduct of his later campaigns. In 1806, he still sought, and gained, the advantage of initial surprise. To this end he had cantoned his troops near the Danube, and thence swiftly concentrated to the north, behind the natural screen formed by the Thuringian forest. Next, debouching suddenly from the wooded range into the open country beyond, his *bataillon carré* drove straight ahead towards the heart of the enemy country. Thus Napoleon found himself, rather than placed himself, on the rear of the Prussian forces; and in swinging round to crush them at Jena, he seems to have relied primarily on sheer weight: the moral effect of his position being incidental, although important.

So also in the campaign against the Russians which followed, in Poland and East Prussia, Napoleon seems concerned mainly with the single end of bringing his enemy to battle—confident that, when this happened, his machine would overpower the enemy. He still uses the manœuvre on to the enemy's rear, but it is more as a means of gripping them firmly, so that they can be drawn into his jaws, than as a means of liquefying their *moral*, so that mastication may be easier.

The indirect approach is here a means of distraction and physical 'traction' rather than of distraction and moral dislocation.

Thus in the Pultusk manœuvre he aimed to draw the Russians westwards so that when he advanced north from Poland, he might cut them off from Russia. The Russians slipped out of his jaws. In January 1807 the Russians moved westwards on their own volition, towards the remnant of their Prussian allies at Danzig, and Napoleon was quick to seize the opportunity to cut their communications with Prussia. His instruc-

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tions, however, fell into the hands of the Cossacks, and the Russian army fell back just in time. Napoleon, thereupon, followed them up directly; and, finding them in a frontal position at Eylau, ready to accept battle, he relied on a purely tactical manœuvre against their rear. Its working suffered from the interference of snowstorms, and the Russians, though mauled, were not masticated. Four months later, both sides had recuperated, and the Russians suddenly moved south against Heilsburg, whereupon Napoleon wheeled his *bataillon carré* east to cut them off from Königsberg, their immediate base. But this time he was so apparently obsessed with the idea of battle that when his cavalry, reconnoitring to the flank of his route, reported the presence of the Russians in a strong position at Friedland, he swung his forces straight at the target. The tactical victory was won, not by surprise or mobility, but by pure offensive power—here expressed in Napoleon's new artillery tactics, the massed concentration of guns at a selected point. This was to become more and more the driving-shaft of his tactical mechanism. If at Friedland, as often later, it ensured victory, it did little to save lives. It is curious how the possession of a blank cheque on the bank of man-power had so analogous an effect in 1807-14 and in 1914-18. And curious, also, that in each case it was associated with the method of intense artillery bombardments.

The explanation may be that lavish expenditure breeds extravagance, the mental antithesis of economy of force—to which surprise and mobility are the means. This hypothesis is strengthened by the similarity of effect seen in Napoleon's policy.

Napoleon was able to use the glamour of his victory at Friedland to reinforce the glamour of his personality in seducing the Tsar from his partners in the

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Fourth Coalition. But he then risked his advantage, and ultimately his empire, by excess in exploiting it. The severity of his terms to Prussia undermined the security of the peace, his policy towards England contemplated nothing short of her ruin, and his aggression raised Spain and Portugal as fresh enemies. Here it is apt to note that it was an indirect approach—Sir John Moore's brief 'in and out' thrust against Burgos and the communications of the French forces in Spain—which dislocated Napoleon's plans in Spain, gave the national rising time and space to gather strength, and thus ensured that the Iberian peninsula should henceforth be a running sore in Napoleon's side. Above all, the moral influence of this first check to Napoleon's irresistible progress gives it a decisive significance. Napoleon had no chance to redeem it, for he was called back by the threatened uprising of Prussia and the fresh intervention of Austria. The latter matured, and in the campaign of 1809, we see Napoleon again trying, at Landshut and Vienna, to manœuvre on to the enemy's rear. But when hitches occur in the execution of these manœuvres, Napoleon's impatience leads him to gamble on a direct approach and battle, and at Aspern-Essling he suffers in consequence his first great defeat. If he retrieves it by the victory of Wagram at the same point, six weeks later, the price is high and the peace thereby gained unstable.

The Peninsular War

But Napoleon had two years' grace in which to operate on and cure the 'Spanish ulcer'. As Moore's intervention had thwarted Napoleon's attempt to check the inflammatory condition in its early stages, so in the years that followed Wellington was to hinder all remedial measures and enable the wound to fester, the poison to spread, through the Napoleonic system. The

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French had beaten, and continued to beat any regular Spanish forces, but the thoroughness of these defeats was of the greatest benefit—to the defeated. For it ensured that the main effort of the Spanish was thrown into guerrilla warfare. An intangible web of guerrilla bands replaced a vulnerable military target, while enterprising and unconventional guerrilla leaders, instead of hide-bound Spanish generals, conducted operations. The worst misfortune for Spain, and hence for England, was the temporary success of attempts to form fresh regular forces. Fortunately they were soon beaten, and as the French dispersed them so, coincidentally, did they disperse their own good fortune. The poison spread again instead of coming to a head.

In this curious warfare, England's most profound influence was in aggravating the trouble and encouraging the sources of it. Rarely has she caused a greater distraction to her opponents at the price of so small a military effort. And the effect produced in Spain was in significant contrast with the slight results, indeed the unhappy results, produced on the one hand by her attempts at direct co-operation with her Continental allies during these wars, and on the other by her expeditions to trans-oceanic points too remote, geographically and psychologically, to affect her opponent. From the standpoint of national policy and prosperity the second class of expedition, however, had its justification in adding Cape Colony, Mauritius, Ceylon, British Guiana, and several West Indian islands to the British Empire.

But the real effect of England's grand-strategic indirect approach in Spain has been obscured by the traditional tendency of historians to become obsessed with battles. Indeed, by treating the Peninsular War as a chronicle of Wellington's battles and sieges it becomes meaningless. Sir John Fortescue did much to

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correct this tendency and fallacy, despite the fact that he was primarily concerned with the localized 'History of the British Army'. It is significant that as his own researches deepened he gave more and more emphasis to the predominant influence of the Spanish guerrillas on the issue of the struggle.

If the presence of the British expeditionary force was an essential foundation for this influence, Wellington's battles were perhaps the least effective part of his operations. By them he inflicted a total loss of some 45,000 men only—counting killed, wounded and prisoners—on the French during the five years' campaign until they were driven out of Spain, whereas Marbot reckoned that the number of French deaths alone during this period averaged a hundred a day. Hence it is a clear deduction that the overwhelming majority of the losses which drained the French strength, and their morale still more, was due to the operations of the guerrillas, and of Wellington himself, in harrying the French and in making the country a desert where the French stayed only to starve. Not the least significant feature is that Wellington fought so few battles in so long a series of campaigns. Was this due to that essentially practical 'common-sense' which biographers have declared to be the key to his character and outlook? In the words of his latest biographer—'direct and narrow realism was the essence of Wellington's character. It was responsible for his limitations and defects, but in the larger stage of his public career it amounted to genius.' This diagnosis admirably fits the symptoms, both good and ill, of Wellington's strategy in the peninsula.

The expedition which was to have such momentous consequences was itself a subtraction of force from the main and abortive effort on the Scheldt, and was undertaken more from the hope of saving Portugal

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than from any deep appreciation of its grand-strategic potentialities in aggravating the 'Spanish ulcer'. Castlereagh's uphill advocacy, however, was aided by 'Sir Arthur Wellesley's expression of opinion that, if the Portuguese army and militia were reinforced by 20,000 British troops, the French would need 100,000 to conquer Portugal, a quantity they could not spare if the Spanish still continued to resist. Expressed in a different way, this might mean that 20,000 British would suffice to cause the 'distraction' of nearly 100,000 French, part at least from the main theatre of war in Austria.

As an aid to Austria the expedition was to prove of no avail, and as a shield to Portugal not altogether satisfactory from a Portuguese standpoint. But as a strain on Napoleon and an advantage to England it bore fruit tenfold.

Wellesley was given 26,000 men, and in April 1809 he arrived at Lisbon. Partly as a result of the Spanish insurrection, partly as a sequel to Moore's thrust at Burgos and retreat to Corunna—the French were widely scattered over the peninsula. Ney was vainly trying to subdue Galicia in the extreme north-western corner. South of him, but in the north of Portugal, Soult lay at Oporto, with his army itself dispersed in detachments. Victor lay round Merida, facing the southern route into Portugal.

Profiting by his central position, his unexpected appearance, and the enemy's dispersion, Wellesley moved north against Soult. Although he failed to cut off Soult's most southerly detachments as he had planned, he surprised Soult himself before the latter could assemble his force, upset his dispositions by a crossing higher up the Douro, and developed this incipient dislocation by heading Soult off from his natural line of retreat. Like Turenne in 1675, Wellesley

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mopped up the resistance without it ever having had the chance to coagulate. And at the end of Soult's enforced retreat through the bleak mountains northward into Galicia, his army had suffered loss and exhaustion out of all proportion to the fighting.

Wellesley's second operation, however, was neither so profitable nor so well-conceived in its adjustment of end and means. Victor, who had remained passively at Merida, was recalled, after Soult's 'disappearance', to Talavera, where he could cover the direct approach to Madrid. A month later Wellesley decided to march by this route on Madrid, pushing into the heart of Spain—and into the lion's jaws. For he offered a target on which all the French armies in Spain could concentrate by the easiest routes. Moreover, by thus rallying on their central pivot they had the chance of knitting together the communications between them—when the armies were scattered these communications were their greatest source of weakness.

Wellesley advanced with only 23,000 men, supported by a similar number of Spanish troops under the feeble Cuesta; whereas Victor in falling back had brought himself within close reach of support from two other French forces near Madrid. And the hostile concentration was likely to total over 100,000, since 'through accident rather than design'—as Fortescue remarks—the forces of Ney, Soult, and Mortier had drifted Madrid-wards from the north. If fortune favours the calculating bold, it often turns against the rash. Hampered by Cuesta's irresolution and his own supplies, Wellesley did not succeed in joining issue with Victor until the latter was reinforced by Joseph Bonaparte from Madrid. Constrained to fall back in his turn, Wellesley emerged somewhat luckily from a defensive battle at Talavera, but would have advanced again if Cuesta had not refused. This was fortunate

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for Wellesley, as Soult was descending upon his rear. Cut off from the route by which he had come, Wellesley escaped by slipping south of the Tagus ; but only after a costly, demoralizing and exhausting retreat did he regain the shelter of the Portuguese frontier. Want of food hampered the French pursuit. This closed the campaign of 1809 and taught Wellesley the worthlessness of Spanish regular forces—a lesson he might have learnt from Moore's experience. As a reward for his efforts he was created Viscount Wellington. He did more to deserve this the next year.

For in 1810, with Austria now driven to peace, Napoleon was free to concentrate his attention on Spain and Portugal—until 1812. These two years were the critical period of the Peninsular War. And the inability of the French to accomplish their purpose then is of greater historical significance than their subsequent defeats, or Wellington's victories, in 1812 and 1813. The foundation of the British success lay in Wellington's shrewd calculation of the economic factor—the limited French means of subsistence—and his construction of the lines of Torres Vedras. His strategy was essentially that of indirect approach to a military-economic object and objective.

Before the main campaign opened he was aided by the Spanish regular forces in their customary way. They embarked on a winter campaign in which they were so thoroughly crushed and dispersed that the French, deprived of any target, were induced to stretch themselves more widely still over Spain—in- vading the rich province of Andalusia in the south.

Napoleon now took control, if from a distance, and by the end of February 1810 had concentrated nearly 300,000 men in Spain—with more to come. Of this total, 65,000 were assigned to Masséna for the task of driving the British out of Portugal. If the number was

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large, its small proportion to the whole is illuminating evidence of the growing strain of the guerrilla war in Spain. And Wellington, by the inclusion of British-trained Portuguese troops, had made up his total to 50,000.

Masséna's invasion came by the north, past Ciudad Rodrigo, and thus gave Wellington the longest time and space for his strategy to take effect. His precautions in stripping the country of provisions formed a 'transmission-brake' on Masséna's advance, while his half-way stand at Bussaco served as a 'foot-brake'—which was strengthened by Masséna's folly in committing his troops to a needless direct assault. Then Wellington fell back to the lines of Torres Vedras which he had constructed, across the mountainous peninsula formed by the Tagus and the sea, to cover Lisbon. On the 14th of October, four months and barely two hundred miles from his start, Masséna came within sight of the lines—a sight which struck him with the full shock of surprise. Unable to force them, he hung on for a month until compelled by starvation to retreat to Santarem, thirty miles back, on the Tagus. Wellington, shrewdly, made no attempt to press his retreat or bring on a battle, but set himself to confine Masséna within the smallest possible area so that he might have the greatest possible difficulty in feeding his men. The French, now and later, had to pay dearly for their faith in the optimistic illusions encouraged by Napoleon's hyperbolical phrase: 'Supplies?—don't talk to me about them. Twenty thousand men can live in a desert.'

Wellington maintained this strategy resolutely, despite the indirect risk of a change of policy at home, and the direct risk caused by Soult's advance in the south, by way of Badajoz, which was made a diversion to relieve the constriction of Masséna. And he

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withstood every effort of Masséna to draw him into an attack. He was both justified and rewarded, for at last, in March, Masséna had to go; and when the starving wreckage of his army recrossed the frontier he had lost 25,000 men, of whom only 2,000 had fallen in action.

Meantime the Spanish guerrillas had been growing ever more active and numerous. In Aragon and Catalonia alone, two French corps (totalling nearly 60,000 men), instead of helping Masséna's Army of Portugal, had been practically paralysed during several months by a few thousand guerrillas and troops used guerrilla-wise. In the south, too, where the French were besieging Cadiz, the very failure of the allies to exploit their victory at Barrosa and raise the siege proved of advantage to them by retaining the besieging troops there on a vain task. Another distracting influence during these years was the constant threat and frequent fact of British landings, at points along the immense coastline, made possible by sea-power.

Henceforth Wellington's greatest influence came through his threats rather than his blows. For, whenever he threatened a point, the French were forced to draw off troops thither, and thus give the guerrillas greater scope in other districts. Wellington, however, was not content with threats. Following up Masséna's retreat on Salamanca, he used his army to cover the blockade of the frontier fortress of Almeida in the north, while he directed Beresford to invest Badajoz in the south. Thereby he tied up his own power of mobility, and divided his force—into two nearly equal parts. But fortune favoured his course. Masséna, having rallied and slightly reinforced his army, came back to the rescue of Almeida; and at Fuentes de Onoro, Wellington was caught in a bad position and seriously imperilled. But he managed to beat off the attack—

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although he admitted, 'If Boney had been there, we should have been beat.' Near Badajoz, too, Beresford marched out to meet Soult's relieving force; after mishandling the fight and admitting defeat at Albuera, the situation was saved for him by his subordinates and troops—if at an exorbitant cost. Wellington now concentrated his efforts on the siege of Badajoz, but without a siege train, until he had to raise the siege as a result of the unfettered move southwards of Marmont—who had taken over Masséna's army—to join Soult. The two now planned a united advance on Wellington. Fortunately, fusion brought friction. And Soult, alarmed by the fresh blaze-up of guerilla war in Andalusia, returned thither with part of his army, leaving Marmont in control. Thanks to Marmont's extreme caution, the campaign of 1811 petered out quietly.

By his battles Wellington had risked much, indeed all, and it would be hard to argue that they had gained much advantage beyond that already produced and promised by his earlier strategy. In view of his slender margin of strength, they were not a profitable investment, for while his loss in them was less than the French, it was proportionately much greater. But he had tided over the most critical period. And now Napoleon unwittingly came to his aid—to make his advantage secure. For Napoleon was preparing his invasion of Russia. Thither his attention and his strength were henceforth turned. This development and the trying guerrilla situation caused a change of plan in Spain, where the main French line of effort was altered to an attempt to subdue Valencia and Andalusia thoroughly before concentrating afresh against Portugal. Compared with 1810, the French troops were reduced by 70,000; and of those who remained, no less than 90,000 were employed—from

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Tarragona on the Mediterranean coast to Oviedo on the Atlantic coast—in guarding the communications with France against the guerrillas.

Thus given free scope and weakened opposition, Wellington sprang suddenly on Ciudad Rodrigo and stormed it, while a detachment under Hill stood guard over his strategic flank and rear. Marmont was unable to intervene, unable to retake the fortress because his siege-train had been captured there, and unable also to follow Wellington across the food-stripped country between them. Under cover of this hunger-screen, Wellington slipped south and stormed Badajoz in turn—if at a far greater cost, and by a narrower margin of time. At Badajoz he captured the French pontoon-train. As he promptly followed up this gain by destroying the French bridge of boats across the Tagus at Almaraz, he had now achieved a definite strategic separation of the two armies of Marmont and Soult, whose nearest way of communication was now by the bridge at Toledo, over three hundred miles from the mouth of the Tagus. Apart from this, Soult was tied fast to Andalusia by a want of supplies and a surfeit of guerrillas, while Wellington, now able to operate secure from interference, concentrated two-thirds of his strength for an advance on Marmont at Salamanca. But the directness of his approach propelled Marmont back towards his source of reinforcement.

The balance of numbers thus being restored, Marmont manœuvred against Wellington's communications, with all the more advantage because he had none of his own to worry about. On several occasions the two armies raced alongside each other in parallel columns, only a few hundred yards apart, each seeking a favourable chance to strike. The French, by their capacity to out-march the British, tended to out-

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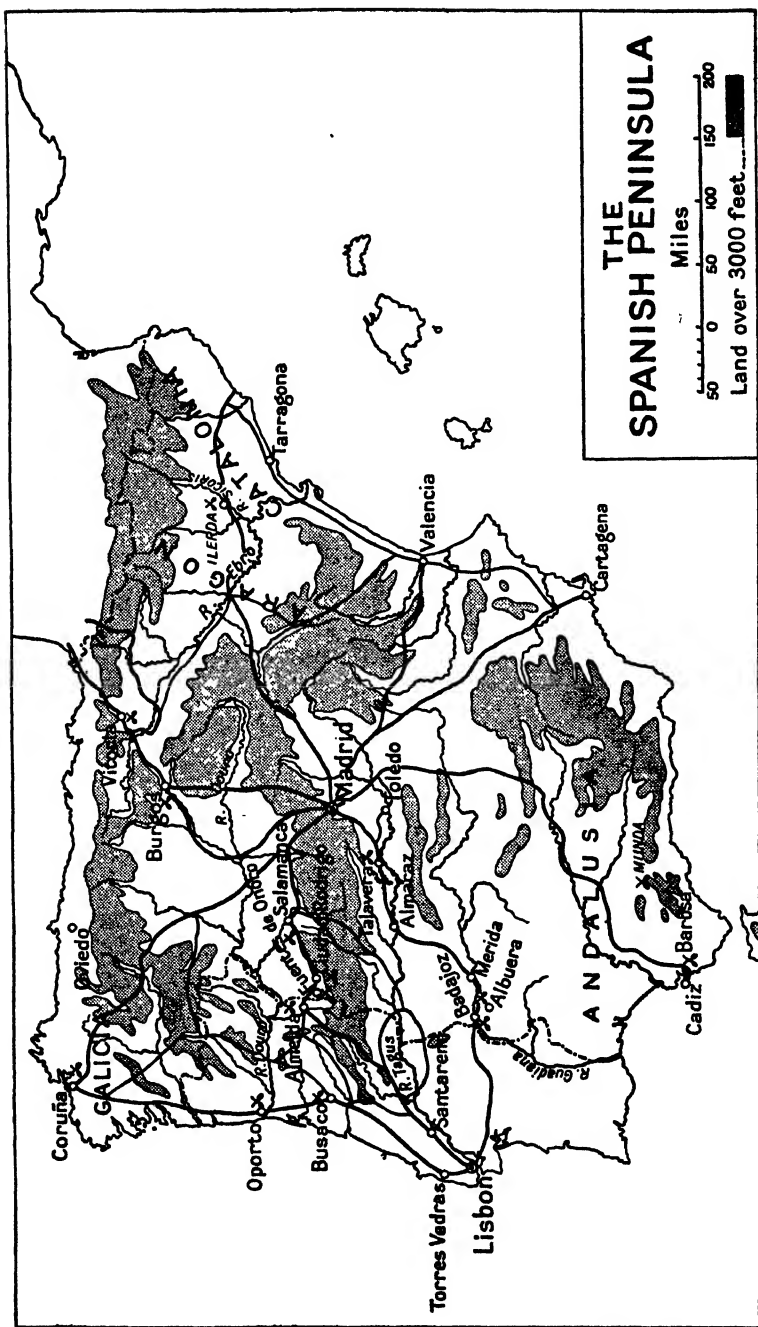
manœuvre them. But on the 22nd of July over-confidence led Marmont into a slip which momentarily dislocated his own forces. He allowed his left wing to become too far separated from his right wing. Wellington instantly exploited the opportunity by a swift pounce upon the exposed wing. This produced the defeat of the French army—before further reinforcements reached it. Wellington did not, however, achieve its real disruption in this battle of Salamanca; and he was still heavily inferior to the French in the peninsula as a whole. He has been blamed for not following up the defeated French forces, now under Clausel. But having lost the immediate chance of dispersing them, it is unlikely that he could have regained it before they reached the shelter of Burgos; and such a pursuit would have exposed him to the risk that King Joseph from Madrid might have descended at any moment on his own rear and communications.

Instead, he decided to make a move on Madrid—for its moral and political effect. His entry into the capital was a symbol and a tonic to the Spanish, while Joseph made a fugitive exit. But the defect of this coup was that Wellington's stay could only be fleeting if the French gathered in force; and nothing was more likely than the loss of Madrid to make their armies, scattered on the circumference, rally on the centre. Wellington cut his stay short without compulsion and marched on Burgos. But the French system of 'living on the country' deprived such a stroke at their communications with France of anything like a normal influence on their situation. And even the limited influence was forfeited by the ineffectiveness of Wellington's siege methods and means, whereby time dribbled away that he could not afford to lose. For his very success at, and after, the battle of Salamanca had induced the French to abandon their tasks and terri-

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tory in Spain in order to concentrate from all quarters against him. In relation to their armies Wellington was more dangerously placed than Moore before him, but he fell back just in time; and, when Hill joined him, he felt secure enough to offer battle to the united French armies at Salamanca—once again. Their numerical advantage was slight compared with earlier days, 90,000 to 68,000, and they did not care to accept the challenge on a battlefield chosen by Wellington. Hence Wellington continued his retreat to Ciudad Rodrigo. And with his arrival there the curtain came down on the campaign of 1812.

Although he was back once more on the Portuguese frontier, and thus, superficially, no further forward, actually the issue of the Peninsular War was decided. For by abandoning the greater part of Spain to concentrate against him, the French had abandoned it to the Spanish guerrillas—and lost the chance of shaking their grip. On top of this disaster came the news of Napoleon's retreat from Moscow, which led to the withdrawal of more French troops from Spain. Thus when the next campaign opened the situation had completely changed. Wellington, now reinforced to 100,000 men, less than half of whom were British, was the aggressor and the superior, while the French, demoralized more by the strain of the incessant guerrilla war than by military defeats, were almost at once compelled to fall back behind the Ebro, and reduced to the role of trying to hold on to the northern fringe of Spain. Even there, the scales were turned against them by the pressure of guerrillas in their rear, in Biscay, and the Pyrenean districts—which forced the French to take away four divisions from their slender strength to withstand this back pressure. Wellington's gradual advance to the Pyrenees and into France—though flecked by occasional misadventures, success-



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fully retrieved—is no more than a strategic epilogue to the story of the Peninsular War.

This happy conclusion could hardly have come but for the moral and physical support of Wellington's presence in the peninsula; and his activities, by distracting the attention of the French in part to him, repeatedly facilitated the spread of the guerrilla war. Yet it is a question, and an interesting speculation, whether his victories in 1812, by stirring the French to cut their loss and contract their zone, did not improve their prospects and make his own advance harder in 1813. For the wider and the longer they were dispersed throughout Spain, the more sure and more complete would be their ultimate collapse. The Peninsular War was an outstanding historical example, achieved by instinctive common sense even more than by intention, of the type of strategy which a century later Lawrence evolved into a reasoned theory, and applied in practice—if without so definite a fulfilment.

From observing the 'Spanish ulcer' we have now to turn back to examine another type of strategical growth, which was insidiously affecting Napoleon's own mind.

Napoleon from Vilna to Waterloo

The Russian campaign of 1812 is the natural climax to the tendencies already seen to be growing in Napoleon's strategy—that of relying more on mass than on mobility, and on strategic formation rather than on surprise. The geographical conditions merely served to accentuate its weaknesses.

The very scale of Napoleon's forces, 450,000 men, induced him to adopt an almost linear distribution, which in turn entailed a direct approach along the line of natural expectation. It is true that, like the Germans in 1914, he 'loaded' one end—the left—of his

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line, and sought to swing it round in a vast sweep upon the Russians at Vilna. But even allowing for his brother Jerome's inertia in the role of fixing the enemy, this manœuvre was too cumbrous and too direct to be an effective means of distracting and dislocating the enemy, unless they had been of abnormal stupidity. And, in the event, its limitations were exposed by the Russians' deliberate adoption of a strategy of evasion. As Napoleon pressed into Russia, after his first blows 'in the air' he contracted his line into his customary *bataillon carré*, and tried to swing it tactically on to the enemy's rear. But even when the Russians, changing to a 'battle' policy, were so foolish as to push their heads towards Napoleon's open jaws, these jaws closed so obviously, at Smolensk, that the Russians slipped out; while at Borodino the jaws broke off their own teeth. No example could have better demonstrated the drawbacks of a convergent as compared with a true indirect approach. The disastrous results of the subsequent retreat from Moscow were due less to the severe weather—the frost actually was later than usual that year—than to the demoralization of the French army. And this was caused through the frustration of its direct battle-aimed strategy by the Russian strategy of evasion—which in turn was the strategic method here used to carry out what may be classified as a war policy of indirect approach.

Moreover, the harm done to Napoleon's fortunes by his defeat in Russia was immensely increased by the moral and material effects of the ill-success of his armies in Spain. And it is significant to note in assessing the deadly effect of England's action here that, in this campaign, England was following her traditional war policy of 'severing the roots'.

When, in 1813, Napoleon, with fresh forces more massive and less mobile than ever, was confronted

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with the uprising of Prussia and with the invading armies of Russia, he sought to crush them in his now habitual way by the converging weight of his *bataillon carré*. But neither the battle of Lützen nor the battle of Bautzen was decisive, and thereafter the allies, by an ever lengthening retirement, thwarted Napoleon's further attempts to bring them to battle. Their evasiveness induced Napoleon to ask for a six weeks' suspension of hostilities; and when it terminated Austria, also, was arrayed with his enemies.

The autumn campaign, which followed, throws a curious light on Napoleon's changed mentality. He had 400,000 men, a total nearly equal to that of his opponents. He used 100,000 for a convergent advance against Berlin, but this direct pressure merely consolidated the resistance of Bernadotte's forces in that area, and the French were thrown back. Meantime, Napoleon himself, with the main army, had taken up a central position covering Dresden in Saxony. But his impatience overcame him, and he suddenly began to advance directly east upon Blücher's 95,000. Blücher fell back to lure him into Silesia, while Schwarzenberg, with 185,000, began to move northward down the Elbe from Bohemia, and across the Bohemian mountains into Saxony—on to Napoleon's rear at Dresden. Leaving a detachment behind, Napoleon hurried back, intending to counter this indirect approach with a still more deadly one. His plan was to move south-west, cross the Bohemian mountains, and place himself across Schwarzenberg's line of retreat through the mountains. The position he had in mind was ideal for a strategic barrage. But the news of the enemy's close approach made him lose his nerve, and at the last moment he decided instead on a direct approach to Dresden, and to Schwarzenberg. This resulted in another victorious battle; but it was

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only tactically decisive, and Schwarzenberg retreated safely southward through the mountains.

A month later the three allied armies began to close in upon Napoleon who, weakened by his battles, had fallen back from Dresden to Düben, near Leipzig. Schwarzenberg lay to the south, Blücher to the north and, unknown to Napoleon, Bernadotte was almost round and behind his northern flank. Napoleon decided on a direct, followed by an indirect, approach—first, to crush Blücher and then to cut Schwarzenberg's communications with Bohemia. In the light of historical experience as set forth in earlier pages, it would seem that the sequence was at fault. Napoleon's direct move on Blücher did not bring the latter to battle. Yet it had one curious result, all the more significant because it was unpremeditated. The direct move upon Blücher was, quite unrealized, an indirect move upon Bernadotte's rear. And, by unnerving Bernadotte, it led him to fall back hurriedly northward, and so removed him from Napoleon's line of retreat. Thereby this 'blow in the air' at Blücher saved Napoleon from utter disaster a few days later. For when Blücher and Schwarzenberg closed in upon him at Leipzig, Napoleon accepted the gage of battle and suffered defeat—but, in his extremity, still had a path by which he could extricate himself, and withdraw safely to France.

In 1814, the allies, now vastly superior in numbers, made their converging invasion of France, Napoleon was driven, for want of the numbers he had expended—through his imperial faith in the power of mass—to resharpen his old weapons of surprise and mobility. Nevertheless, brilliant as his handling of them, the accent should be put on the word 'his'—for he was too impatient, and too obsessed with the idea of battle, to use them with the artistic subtlety of a Hannibal or a Scipio, a Cromwell or a Marlborough.

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By their use, however, he long postponed his fate. And he made a discerning adjustment between his end and his means. Realizing that his means were too reduced to obtain him a military decision, he aimed to dislocate the co-operation between the allied armies; and he exploited mobility more astonishingly than ever to this end. Even so, remarkable as was his success in retarding the enemy's advance, it might perhaps have been more effective and enduring if his ability to continue this strategy had not been diminished by his inherent tendency to consummate every strategic by a tactical success. By repeated concentrations—five of them marked by manœuvres which *struck* the target in rear—against the separated fractions of enemy, he inflicted a series of defeats on them: until he was rash enough to make a direct approach and attack on Blücher at Laon, and suffered a defeat that he could not afford.

With only 30,000 men left, he decided, as a last throw, to move eastward to Saint Dizier, rally such garrisons as he could find, and raise the countryside against the invaders. By this move he would be across Schwarzenberg's communications; he had, however, not only to place himself on the enemy's rear but to raise an army there before he could act. And the problem was complicated not only by lack of time and lack of a force, but by the peculiar moral sensitiveness of the base he thereby uncovered. For Paris was not like an ordinary base of supply. As a crowning mishap, his orders fell into the enemy's hands, so that both surprise and time were forfeited. Even then, so potent was the strategic 'pull' of his manœuvre, it was only after heated debate that the allies resolved to move into Paris, instead of turning back to counter his move. Their move proved to be a 'moral knock-out' for Napoleon's cause. It has been said that the factor

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which most influenced their decision was the fear that Wellington, moving up from the Spanish frontier, would reach Paris first. If this be true, it forms an ironical final triumph for the strategy of indirect approach and its decisive 'pull'.

In 1815, after his return from Elba, the size of Napoleon's forces seems to have sent the 'blood' to his head again. Nevertheless, in his own fashion he used both surprise and mobility, and in consequence came within reach of a decisive result. If his approach to the armies of Blücher and Wellington was geographically direct, its timing was a surprise and its direction dislocated the enemy's 'joint'. But, at Ligny, Ney failed to carry out the manœuvre role allotted to him—the tactical indirect approach—so that the Prussians escaped decisive defeat. And when Napoleon turned on Wellington at Waterloo his approach was purely direct, thus entailing a loss of time, and of men, which accentuated the greater trouble caused by Grouchy's failure to keep Blücher 'distracted' well away from the battlefield. Thus Blücher's appearance, even though he merely arrived on Napoleon's flank, by its unexpectedness was psychologically an indirect approach—and as such was decisive.

Chapter IX

1854–1914

When the great 'Peace' Exhibition of 1851 ushered in a fresh era of bellicosity, the first war of the new series was as indecisive in its military course as in its political end. Yet from the squalor and stupidity of the Crimean War we can at least cull negative lessons. Chief among them is the barrenness of the direct approach. When the generals wore blinkers it was natural that an aide-de-camp should launch the Light Brigade straight at the Russian guns. In the British army, the directness which permeated every sphere of action was so extremely precise and rigidly formal that it perplexed the French commander, Canrobert—until some years later he attended a Court Ball. Then light came to him, and he exclaimed: 'The British fight as Victoria dances.' But the Russians were no less deeply imbued with the instinct of directness—so that even when a spasmodic manœuvre was attempted, a regiment, after marching all day, finally found itself back facing Sebastopol as at daybreak.

In studying the depressing evidence of the Crimea we cannot overlook, although we should not exaggerate, the fact that in the forty years which had elapsed since Waterloo the armies of Europe had become more strictly professionalized. Its significance is not as an argument against professional armies, but

as an illustration of the latent dangers of a professional environment. These dangers are inevitably accentuated on the higher levels, and with length of service, unless counteracted by revivifying touch with the outer world of affairs and thought. On the other hand, the early stages of the American Civil War were to reveal the weaknesses of an unprofessional army. Training is essential to forge an effective instrument for the general to handle. A long war or a short peace afford the most favourable conditions for the production of such an instrument. But there is a defect in the system if the instrument is superior to the artist.

In this, as in other aspects, the American Civil War of 1861-1865 offers an illuminating contrast. The military leaders, especially in the South, were mainly drawn from those who had made arms their profession, but the pursuit of this profession had in many cases been varied with civil employment or leisure for individual study. And the parade ground had not been either the breeding ground or the boundary of their strategical ideas. Nevertheless, despite a refreshing breadth of view and fertility of resource in what may be termed local strategy, the conventional aim at first ruled the major operations.

The American Civil War

In the opening campaign the opposing armies sought each other in a direct advance, and the result was indecisive alike in Virginia and in Missouri. Then McClellan, appointed to the command-in-chief of the North, in 1862 conceived the plan of utilizing sea-power to transfer his army on to the enemy's strategic flank. This had richer prospects than a direct overland advance, but seems to have been conceived more as the means of a shorter direct approach to Richmond, the enemy's capital, than as an indirect ap-

proach in the true sense. But these prospects were nullified by President Lincoln's reluctance to accept a calculated risk—in consequence of which he kept back McDowell's corps for the direct protection of Washington. This deprived McClellan not only of part of his strength but of the element of distraction essential to the success of his plan.

Hence, on landing, McClellan lost a month in front of Yorktown, and the plan had to be altered to a convergent or semi-direct approach in conjunction with McDowell, who was only allowed to advance overland along the direct approach from Washington to Richmond. 'Stonewall' Jackson's indirect operations in the Shenandoah Valley then exerted such a moral influence on the Washington Government as again to suspend McDowell's share in the main advance. Even so, McClellan's advanced troops were within four miles of Richmond, ready for the final spring, before Lee was sufficiently strong to intervene. And even after McClellan's tactical set-back in the Seven Days' Battles, he had the strategical advantage—perhaps a greater one than in the previous phase. For the interruption of his flank march had not prevented him switching his base southwards to the James River, whereby he had not only secured his own communications but placed himself dangerously close to the enemy's communications running southward from Richmond.

The advantage was forfeited by a change of strategy. Halleck, placed over McClellan's head from political motives as general-in-chief, ordered McClellan's army to be re-embarked and withdrawn northward to unite with Pope's army in a direct overland advance. As so often in history, a direct doubling of strength meant not a doubling but a halving of the effect—through simplifying the enemy's 'lines of expectation'. Yet

Halleck's strategy fulfilled the obvious interpretation of the principle of concentration—thereby revealing the pitfalls which underlie this conventional path to the military goal. The ineffectiveness of the strategy of direct approach which ruled throughout the second half of 1862 was appropriately sealed by the bloody repulse at Fredericksburg on the 13th of December. And the continuance of this strategy in 1863 led, not to a closer approach to Richmond, but to a Confederate invasion of Northern territory—following the collapse of the Union army's offensive.

The direct invasion was in turn repulsed at Gettysburg, and the close of the year saw both armies back in their original positions, both too drained of blood to do more than bare their teeth at each other across the Rapidan and Rappahannock. It is significant that in these campaigns of mutual direct approach, such advantage as there was inclined in turn to the side which stood on the defensive, content to counter the other's advance. For in such strategical conditions the defensive, by its mere avoidance of vain effort, is inherently the less direct form of two direct strategies.

The repulse of Lee's invasion at Gettysburg has commonly been acclaimed the turning-point of the war, but the claim is only justified in a dramatic sense, and the sober verdict of historical opinion has more and more emphasized that the decisive effects came from the West. The first was as early as April 1862, when Farragut's squadron ran past the forts guarding the mouth of the Mississippi, and thereby gained the bloodless surrender of New Orleans. It was the thin end of a strategical wedge which split the Confederacy up the vital line of this great river.

The second decisive effect was achieved higher up the Mississippi on the same day (the 4th of July) as Lee began his retreat from Gettysburg. This was the

capture of Vicksburg by Grant, which gave the Union complete control of this vital artery. Thereby the Confederacy was deprived permanently of the nourishment of reinforcements and supplies from the Trans-Mississippi states. But the grand-strategic effect of this concentration against the junior partner should not be allowed to overshadow the strategic means by which it was achieved. The first advance on Vicksburg—in December 1862—had been made by an overland route down the railway, combined with a waterborne expedition under Sherman down the Mississippi. When Grant's advance was hamstrung by Confederate cavalry raids on his communications, the Confederate forces were able to concentrate against Sherman's move, which thus became an essentially direct approach—and was repulsed without difficulty when he tried to make a landing close to Vicksburg. In February and March 1863, four unsuccessful attempts were made to reach the goal by narrow outflanking manœuvres. Then, in April, Grant resorted to a truly indirect approach which had a likeness, not merely in its audacity, to Wolfe's final bid for Quebec.

Part of the Union fleet and transports ran southward past the Vicksburg batteries, by night, to a point thirty miles below the fortress. The bulk of the army moved thither overland, by the west bank of the Mississippi; and, under cover of Sherman's distracting movements towards the north-east of Vicksburg, it was transported to the east bank in face of weak opposition. Then, when Sherman rejoined him, Grant took the calculated risk of cutting himself loose from his new temporary base and moving north-eastward into the enemy's territory to place himself on the rear of Vicksburg, and astride its communications with the main Eastern states of the Confederacy. In this manœuvre he made almost a complete circuit from his

starting-point. He thus appeared to put himself midway between the enemy's upper and lower jaws—their two forces which were concentrating, respectively, at Vicksburg and at Jackson, forty miles to the east (Jackson was the junction of a lateral north and south railway with the main east and west line). But in reality he dislocated the action of these jaws.

It is worthwhile to note that, on arriving at this railway, he found it advisable first to move his whole army eastward to compel the enemy to evacuate Jackson. This illustrated the change in strategical conditions brought about by the development of railways. For while Napoleon had used the line of a river or range of hills as his strategic barrage, Grant's strategic barrage was constituted by the possession of a single point—a railway junction. Once this was secured, he turned about and moved on Vicksburg, which was now isolated, and remained isolated long enough to ensure its capitulation seven weeks later. The strategic sequel was the opening of the Chattanooga gateway into Georgia, the granary of the Confederacy, and thence into the Eastern states as a whole.

Defeat was now hardly avoidable by the Confederacy. Yet the Union almost forfeited the victory already ensured. For in 1864, with the north growing weary under the strain, the moral element became preponderant. The peace party was being daily swelled from the ranks of the war-weary, the presidential election was due in November, and unless Lincoln was to be supplanted by a President pledged to seek a compromise peace, a solid guarantee of early victory must be forthcoming. To this end, Grant was summoned from the west to take over the supreme command. How did he seek to gain the required early victory? By reverting to the strategy which good orthodox soldiers always adopt—that of using his immensely

superior weight to smash the opposing army, or at least to wear it down by a 'continuous hammering'. We have seen that in the Vicksburg campaign he had only adopted the true indirect approach after repeated direct approaches had failed. He had then brought it off with masterly skill—but the underlying lesson had not impressed itself on his mind.

Now, in supreme command, he was true to his nature. He decided on the old and direct overland approach southward from the Rappahannock towards Richmond. But with a certain difference of aim—for the enemy's army rather than the enemy's capital was his real objective. He directed his subordinate, Meade, that 'wherever Lee goes, there you will go too'. And, in justice to Grant, it should also be noted that if his approach was direct in the broad sense, it was in no sense a mere frontal push. Indeed, he continuously sought to turn his enemy's flanks by manœuvre, if manœuvre of a narrow radius. Further, he fulfilled all the military precepts about keeping his army well concentrated and maintaining his objective undeterred by alarms elsewhere. Even a Foch could not have surpassed his 'will to victory'. And those who practised a similar method in 1914-18 might have felt envy of him for the generous support given, and unfailing confidence shown, by his political chief. It would be hard to find conditions more ideal for the orthodox strategy of direct approach in its best manner.

Yet by the end of the summer of 1864 the ripe fruit of victory had withered in his hands. The Union forces had almost reached the end of their endurance, and Lincoln despaired of re-election—a sorry repayment for the blank cheque he had given his military executant. It is an ironical reflection that the determination with which Grant had wielded his superior masses, now fearfully shrunk after the fierce battles of

the Wilderness and Cold Harbour, had utterly failed to crush the enemy's army, while the chief result—the geographical advantage of having worked round close to the rear of Richmond—was gained by the bloodless manœuvres which had punctuated his advance. He had thus the modified satisfaction of being back, after immense loss, in the position which McClellan had occupied in 1862.

But when the sky looked blackest it suddenly lightened. At the November elections, Lincoln was returned to power. What factor came to the rescue, and averted the probability that McClellan, the nominee of the peace-desiring Democratic party, would replace him? Not Grant's campaign, which made practically no progress between July and December, and definitely petered out with a costly double failure in mid-October. By the verdict of historians, Sherman's capture of Atlanta in September was the instrument of salvation.

When Grant had been called to the supreme command, Sherman, who had played no small part in his Vicksburg success, had succeeded him in the chief command in the west. Between the two there was a contrast of outlook. While Grant's primary objective was the opposing army, Sherman's was the seizure of strategic points. Atlanta, the base of the army opposing him, was not only the junction of four important railways, but the source of vital supplies. As Sherman pointed out, it was 'full of foundries, arsenals and machine shops', besides being a moral symbol; he argued that 'its capture would be the death-knell of the Confederacy'. And he sought to strike it by manœuvre, as far as possible, rather than battle—deeply imbued with the idea of success at the lowest possible price.

Whatever divergence of opinion may exist as to the respective merits of Grant's objective and Sherman's,

it is obvious that the latter is better suited to the psychology of a democracy. Perhaps only an absolute ruler, firmly in the saddle, can hope to maintain unswervingly the military ideal of the 'armed forces' objective—even he would be wise to adjust it to the realities of the situation, and to weigh the prospects of fulfilling it. But the strategist who is the servant of a democratic government has less rein. Dependent on the support and confidence of his employers, he has to work with a narrower margin of time and cost than the 'absolute' strategist, and is more pressed for quick profits. Whatever the ultimate prospects he cannot afford to postpone dividends too long. Hence it may be necessary for him to swerve aside temporarily from his objective, or at least to give it a new guise by changing his line of operations. Faced with these inevitable handicaps, it is fitting to ask whether military theory should not be more ready to reconcile its ideals with the inconvenient reality that its military effort rests on a popular foundation—that for the supply of men and munitions, and even for the chance of continuing to fight at all, it depends on the consent of the 'man in the street'. He who pays the piper calls the tune, and strategists might be better paid in kind if they attuned their strategy, so far as is rightly possible, to the popular ear.

Sherman's economy of force by manœuvre is the more notable because, compared with Grant in Virginia, he was practically tied to one line of railway for his supplies. Yet, rather than commit his troops to a direct attack, he cut loose temporarily even from this. Only once in all these weeks of manœuvre did he attempt a frontal attack, at Kenesaw Mountain; and it is as significant that he did it to save his troops from the strain of a further flank march over rain-swamped roads as that it suffered a repulse—which was mitigated

because the attack was stopped immediately after the first check. This, indeed, was the only occasion during the whole 130-mile advance through mountainous and river-intersected country that Sherman committed his troops to an offensive battle. Instead, he manœuvred so skilfully as to lure the Confederates time after time into vain attacks upon him. To force an opponent acting on the strategic defensive into such a succession of costly tactical offensives was an example of strategic artistry unparalleled in history. And it was all the more remarkable because of the way Sherman was tied to a single line of communications. Even from the narrowest military criterion, ignoring its immense moral and economic effect, it was a great feat; for Sherman inflicted more casualties than he suffered, not merely relatively but actually—in ‘striking’ comparison with Grant in Virginia.

After gaining Atlanta, Sherman took a risk greater than ever before, and for which he has been much criticized by military commentators. He was convinced that if he could march through, and ruin the railway systems of, Georgia—the ‘granary of the South’—and then march through the Carolinas—the heart of the South—the moral impression of this invasion, and the stoppage of supplies going north to Richmond and Lee’s army, would cause the collapse of the Confederates’ resistance. Hence, ignoring Hood’s army, which he had forced to evacuate Atlanta, he began his famous ‘march to the sea’ through Georgia, living on the country while he destroyed the railways. On the 15th of November 1864, he left Atlanta; on the 10th of December he reached the outskirts of Savannah, and there reopened his communications—this time, by sea. To cite the verdict of the Confederate general, and historian, Alexander—‘There is no question that the moral effect of this march upon the country at large

... was greater than would have been the most decided victory.' Sherman then moved northwards through the Carolinas towards Lee's rear, depriving the South of its chief remaining ports.

Not until over three months later, the beginning of April, did Grant resume his advance. This obtained a dramatic success, and the surrender of Richmond was followed within a week by the surrender of Lee's army. Superficially, it was a triumphant vindication for Grant's direct strategy and 'battle' objective. Rather than forfeit the glamour for the Army of the Potomac, he even took pains to ensure that Sherman's army should not arrive on the scene prematurely. But, for a serious judgement, the time factor is all important. The collapse of the Confederate resistance was due to the emptiness of its stomach reacting on its moral. The indirect approach to the enemy's economic and moral rear had proved as decisive in the ultimate phase as it had been in the successive steps by which that decision was prepared in the west. The truth comes home to anyone who undertakes a careful and comprehensive study of the war. It was appreciated more than thirty years ago by the future official historian of the World War, General Edmonds, who in his history of the American Civil War reached the conclusion that:

'The military genius of the great confederate leaders, Lee and Jackson, the unrivalled fighting capacity of the Army of Northern Virginia, and the close proximity of the rival capitals, have caused a disproportionate attention to be concentrated upon the eastern theatre of war. It was in the west that the decisive blows were struck. The capture of Vicksburg and Port Hudson in July 1863 was the real turning point of the war, and it was the operations of Sherman's grand army of the west which really led to the collapse of the



Confederacy at Appomattox Court House'—the site of Lee's surrender in the east.

The disproportionate attention may be traced partly to the glamour of battle which hypnotizes most students of military history, and partly to the spell cast by Henderson's epic biography *Stonewall Jackson*—more epic than history. The distinctive military value of this book is scarcely reduced, and even enriched, through embodying more of Henderson's conception of war than of Jackson's execution. But by the interest it created in the American Civil War it focussed the attention of British military students on the campaigns in Virginia, to the neglect of the western theatres—where the decisive acts took place. A modern historian might render a service to future generations if he were to analyse the effect of this 'disproportionate attention', not merely one-sided but fallacious, upon British military thought before 1914, and British strategy in 1914-18.

Moltke's Campaigns

When one passes from the American Civil War to the wars in Europe which followed on its heels, one is impressed above all by the sharpness of its contrasts. The first contrast is that in 1866 and 1870 both sides were, nominally at least, prepared for the conflict; the second, that the contestants were professional armies; the third, that the opposing higher commands achieved a record of mistakes and miscalculations unapproached by either side in the American Civil War; the fourth, that the strategy adopted by the Germans in both wars was far more lacking in art; the fifth, that, despite the deficiency, the issue was quickly decided. Moltke's strategy was that of a direct approach with little trace of guile, relying on the sheer smashing power of a superior concentration of force. Are we

to conclude that these two wars are the proverbial exceptions which prove the rule? They are certainly exceptional, but hardly exceptions to the rule that has emerged from the long list of cases already examined. For in none of them were inferiority of force and stupidity of mind so markedly combined in the scale of the defeated side, weighing it down from the outset.

In 1866, the Austrians' inferiority of force rested primarily in the fact of having an inferior weapon—for the Prussians' breech-loading rifle gave them an advantage over the Austrians' muzzle-loader which the battlefield amply proved, even if academic military thought in the next generation tended to overlook it. In 1870, the French inferiority of force lay partly in their inferior numbers and partly, as with the Austrians of 1866, in their inferior training.

These conditions are more than adequate to explain the decisiveness of the Austrian defeat in 1866 and, still more, the French defeat in 1870. In preparation for war, any strategist would be rash to base his plans on the supposition that his enemy would be as weak in brain and body as the Austrians of 1866 and the French in 1870.

At the same time, it is worth pointing out that the German strategy was less direct in execution than in conception. In 1866, the need to save time by using all available railways led Moltke to detrain the Prussian forces on a widely extended front of over 250 miles. His intention was, by a rapid advance, converging inward through the frontier mountain belt, to unite his armies in northern Bohemia. But the loss of time due to the King of Prussia's reluctance to appear the aggressor frustrated his intention—and thereby endowed his strategy with an indirectness of approach that he had not intended. For the Austrian Army concentrated and pushed forward in the interval, thus

depriving Moltke of his desired concentration area. And the Prussian Crown Prince, believing that the projecting province of Silesia was menaced, wrung from Moltke a reluctant sanction to move his army south-eastwards to safeguard Silesia. Thereby he separated himself further from the other armies; and thereby also he put himself in a position to menace the flank and rear of the Austrian mass. Pedants have spilled much ink in condemning Moltke for sanctioning this wide extension; in reality, it scattered the seeds of a decisive victory, even though he had not sown them deliberately.

These dispositions so disturbed the mental equilibrium of the Austrian command that the Prussians, despite a prodigal series of blunders, were able, first to get through the mountains on both sides, and then to reap the harvest at Königgrätz—where more blunders contributed to the indirectness, and hence the decisiveness of their approach. The Austrian commander, indeed, was beaten before the battle opened: he had telegraphed to his Emperor urging an immediate peace.

It is worth note that Moltke's far-stretched assembly of his forces proved to have more flexibility than the Austrians' concentration on a front of forty miles—which gave them the apparent advantage of being able to operate on 'interior lines'. And it should also be mentioned that, although Moltke's intention had been to concentrate his forces before the enemy was met, this was not with the aim of delivering a direct attack. His original plan had two branches. If exploration were to show that the Austrians' supposed position behind the Elbe at Josefstadt was insecure, the Crown Prince's army was to side-step eastwards and take it in flank, while the other two armies pinned it in front. If an attack seemed impracticable, all three armies were to circle westward, cross the Elbe at Pardubitz,

and then, swinging east, menace the enemy's communications with the south. In the event, however, the Austrians were found to be on the near side of the Elbe, having concentrated further forward than Moltke expected—so that the Crown Prince's direction of advance automatically turned their flank, and brought about their envelopment.

In 1870, Moltke had intended to bring about a decisive battle on the Saar, in which all his three armies would concentrate on and pulverize the French. This plan was upset—not by the enemy's action, but by their paralysis. This paralysis was caused by the mere news that the German Third Army, on the extreme left, had crossed the frontier far to the east and won a minor tactical success over a French detachment at Weissenburg. In the outcome, the indirect effect of this petty engagement was more decisive than the intended great battle would probably have been. For, instead of being wheeled inwards to augment the main mass, the Third Army was allowed to pursue a tranquil course well outside the zone of the main opposing armies. Thus it took no part in the blundering battles of Vionville and Gravelotte—the position of the French was such that it could hardly have taken an effective part if it had been nearer. And it thereby became the vital factor in the next, and decisive, phase.

For when the French main army—stimulated rather than depressed by the result of the battle of Gravelotte—fell back to a flank, into Metz, it might easily have slipped away from the exhausted German First and Second armies; but the likelihood of interception by the Third Army was an inducement to Bazaine to stay securely in Metz. Thus the Germans had time to recover cohesion; the French, time to lose it, in the inactivity which followed their abandonment of the open field. In consequence, MacMahon was enticed—

or, rather, politically pressed—into his ill-advised and worse-conducted move to the relief of Metz. Thus, unintended and unforeseen, was created the opportunity for the German Third Army, still marching 'free' towards Paris, to make an indirect approach to MacMahon's army. Making a complete change of direction from westward to northward, it moved round on the flank and rear of MacMahon. The result was Sedan. Thus there was more indirectness in the decisive phase than a superficial view would suggest. But it was the superficial, not the underlying deduction, that influenced the mass of military theorizing which followed 1870. And this influence dominated the next large-scale war—the Russo-Japanese.

The Russo-Japanese War

The Japanese strategy, slavishly following its German mentors, was essentially that of a direct approach. There was no real attempt to take advantage of the unusually advantageous condition that the Russian war-effort was entirely dependent on a single line of railway—the Trans-Siberian. Never in all history has an army drawn breath through so long and narrow a windpipe, and the very size of its body made its breathing more difficult. But all that Japan's strategists contemplated was a direct blow at, and into, the teeth of the Russian army. And they held their own forces more closely grouped than those of Moltke in 1870. It is true that they attempted a certain convergence of approach before Liao-Yang, and subsequently, on making contact, sought repeatedly to outflank their opponent; but if these outflanking movements look comparatively wide on the map they were extremely narrow in proportion to the scale of the forces. Although they had no 'free' army as it was Moltke's good fortune to have, no unintended bait such as



Metz, and no MacMahon to swallow it—for they had swallowed their own bait in taking Port Arthur—they hoped for a Sedan. Instead, there was an abundance of indecisive bloodshed. As a result, they were so exhausted after the final indecisive battle of Mukden that they were glad, and lucky, to make peace with a foe who had no heart in the struggle, and had not yet put one-tenth of his available forces into it.

This analysis of history is concerned with facts and not with conjectures: with what was done, and its result, not with what might have been done. The theory of the indirect approach which has evolved from it must rest on the concrete evidence of actual experience that the direct approach tends to be indecisive. It is not affected by arguments for or against the difficulties of making an indirect approach in a particular case. From the standpoint of the basic thesis it is irrelevant whether a general could have taken, or could have done better by taking, a different course.

But for the general service of military knowledge speculation is always of interest, and often of value. So, diverging from the direct path of this study, one may point out the potential parallel between Port Arthur and Mantua—while taking account of the handicaps which the Japanese suffered in the scanty communications and difficult country of Korea and Manchuria. If conditions were harder in some ways, they were more advantageous in others—and the instrument better. Thus reflection prompts the question whether, in the earlier phase of the war, Japanese strategy might not with advantage have exploited the bait of Port Arthur in the way that Bonaparte exploited Mantua. And, in the later phase, there would seem to have been scope for using at least a proportion of the Japanese force against the slender Russian windpipe between Harbin and Mukden.

Chapter X

CONCLUSIONS

This survey has covered twelve wars which decisively affected the course of European history in ancient times, and the eighteen major wars of modern history—counting as one the struggle against Napoleon which, temporarily damped down in one place, burst out afresh in another with no real intermission. These thirty conflicts embraced more than 280 campaigns. In only six of these campaigns—those which culminated at Issus, Gaugamela, Friedland, Wagram, Sadowa, and Sedan—did a decisive result follow a plan of direct strategic approach to the main army of the enemy. In the first two of these, Alexander's advance was prepared by a grand strategy of indirect approach, which had seriously shaken the Persian empire and its adherents' confidence, while his success in any battlefield test was virtually guaranteed by the possession of a tactical instrument of greatly superior quality, which was applied in a technique of tactical indirect approach. In the next two cases, Napoleon had each time begun by attempting an indirect approach, while his resort to direct attack was due in part to his impatience, and in part to his confidence in the superiority of his instrument. This superiority was based on his use of massed artillery against a key point, and at both Friedland and Wag-

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ram the decision was primarily due to this new tactical method. But the price paid for these successes, and its ultimate effect on Napoleon's own fortunes, do not encourage a resort to similar directness even with a similar tactical superiority. As for 1866 and 1870, we have seen that although both campaigns were conceived as direct approaches, they acquired an unintended indirectness—which was reinforced by the Germans' tactical superiority in each case; a superiority assured by the breech-loader in 1866, and by superior artillery in 1870. These six campaigns, when analysed, provide little justification for the complaisant adoption of a direct strategy by anyone entitled to be called a general. Yet throughout history the direct approach has been the normal form of strategy, and a purposeful indirect approach the exception. It is curious, too, how often generals have adopted the latter, not as their initial strategy, but as a last resource. Yet it has brought them a decision where the direct approach had brought them failure—and thereby left them in a weakened condition to attempt the indirect. A decisive success obtained in such deteriorated conditions acquires all the greater significance.

Our survey has revealed a large number of campaigns in which the indirectness of approach is as manifest as the decisiveness of the issue—among them those of Lysander in the Aegean, 405 B.C.; Epaminondas in the Peloponnese, 362 B.C.; Philip in Boeotia, 338 B.C.; Alexander on the Hydaspes; Cassander and Lysimachus in the Near East, 302 B.C.; Hannibal's Trasimene campaign in Etruria; Scipio's Utica and Zama campaigns in Africa; Caesar's Ilerda campaign in Spain; and, in modern history, Cromwell's Preston, Dunbar, and Worcester campaigns; Turenne's Alsace campaign of 1674–5; Eugène's Italian campaign of 1701; Marlborough's Flanders campaign of 1708, and

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Villars's of 1712; Wolfe's Quebec campaign; Jourdan's Moselle-Meuse campaign of 1794; the Archduke Charles's Rhine-Danube campaign of 1796; Bonaparte's Italian campaigns of 1796, 1797, and 1800; his Ulm and Austerlitz campaigns of 1805; Grant's Vicksburg and Sherman's Atlanta campaigns. In addition, the survey has brought out numerous border-line examples in which either the indirectness or its effect are less clearly established.

This high proportion of history's decisive campaigns, the significance of which is enhanced by the comparative rarity of the indirect approach, enforces the conclusion that the indirect approach is by far the most hopeful and economic form of strategy. Can we draw still stronger and more definite deductions from history? Yes. With the exception of Alexander, the consistently successful great commanders of history, when faced by an enemy in a position strong naturally or materially, have hardly ever attacked it directly. If, under pressure of circumstances, they have reluctantly risked a direct attack, the result has commonly been to blot their record with a failure.

Further, history shows that rather than resign himself to a direct approach, a Great Captain will take even the most hazardous indirect approach—if necessary over mountains, deserts or swamps, with only a fraction of force, even cutting himself loose from his communications. Facing, in fact, every unfavourable condition rather than accept the risk of stalemate invited by direct approach. Natural hazards, however formidable, are inherently less dangerous and less uncertain than fighting hazards. All conditions are more calculable, all obstacles more surmountable, than those of human resistance. By reasoned calculation and preparation they can be overcome almost to timetable. While Napoleon was able to cross the Alps in

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1800 'according to plan', the little fort of Bard could interfere so seriously with the movement of his army as to endanger his whole plan.

Turning now to reverse the sequence of our examination, and surveying in turn the decisive battles of history, we find that in almost all the victor had his opponent at a psychological disadvantage before the clash took place. Examples are Marathon, Salamis, Aegospotamoi, Mantinea, Chaeronea, Gaugamela (through grand strategy), the Hydaspes, Ipsus, Trasimene, Cannae, Metaurus, Zama, Tricameron, Taginæ, Hastings, Preston, Dunbar, Worcester, Blenheim, Oudenarde, Denain, Quebec, Fleurus, Rivoli, Austerlitz, Jena, Vicksburg, Königgrätz, Sedan.

Combining the strategical and the tactical examination, we find that most of the examples fall into one of two categories. They were produced either by a strategy of elastic defence—calculated retirement—that was capped by a tactical offensive, or by a strategy of offence, aimed to place oneself in a position 'up-setting' to the opponent, and capped by a tactical defensive: with a sting in the tail. Either compound forms an indirect approach, and the psychological basis of both can be expressed in the word 'lure' or 'trap'. Indeed, it might even be said, in a deeper and wider sense than Clausewitz implied, that the defensive is the stronger as well as the more economical form of strategy. For the second compound, although superficially and logistically an offensive move, has for its underlying motive to draw the opponent into an 'unbalanced' advance. The most effective indirect approach is one that lures or startles the opponent into a false move—so that, as in ju-jitsu, his own effort is turned into the lever of his overthrow.¹

¹ The latest example was the precipitate advance of the French and British Armies into Belgium in May 1940.

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In history, the indirect approach has normally consisted of a logistical military move directed against an economic target—the source of supply of either the opposing state or army. Occasionally, however, the move has been purely psychological in aim, as in some of the operations of Belisarius. Whatever the *form*, the *effect* to be sought is the dislocation of the opponent's mind and dispositions—such an effect is the true gauge of an indirect approach.

A further deduction, perhaps not positive but at least suggestive, from our survey, is that in a campaign against more than one state or army it is more fruitful to concentrate first against the weaker partner, than to attempt the overthrow of the stronger in the belief that the latter's defeat will automatically involve the collapse of the others.

In the two outstanding struggles of the ancient world, the overthrow of Persia by Alexander and of Carthage by Scipio both followed upon the severing of the roots. And this grand strategy of indirect approach not only gave birth to the Macedonian and Roman empires, but created the greatest of their successors, the British Empire. On it, too, was founded the fortunes and imperial power of Napoleon Bonaparte. Later still, on this foundation arose the great and solid structure of the United States.

The art of the indirect approach can only be mastered, and its full scope appreciated, by study of and reflection upon the whole history of war. But we can at least crystallize the lessons into two simple maxims, one negative, the other positive. The first is that, in face of the overwhelming evidence of history, no general is justified in launching his troops to a direct attack upon an enemy firmly in position. The second, that instead of seeking to upset the enemy's equilibrium by one's attack, it must be upset before

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a real attack is, or can be successfully, launched.

Lenin had a vision of fundamental truth when he said that 'the soundest strategy in war is to postpone operations until the moral disintegration of the enemy renders the delivery of the mortal blow both possible and easy'. This is not always practicable, nor his method of propaganda always fruitful. But it will bear adaptation—'The soundest strategy in any campaign is to postpone battle, and the soundest tactics to postpone attack, until the moral dislocation of the enemy renders the delivery of a decisive blow practicable.'

Chapter XI

CONSTRUCTION

Having drawn our conclusions from an analysis of history it seems advantageous to construct on the fresh foundations a new dwelling house for strategic thought.

Let us first be clear as to what is strategy. Clausewitz, in his monumental work, *On War*, defined it as 'the art of the employment of battles as a means to gain the object of war. In other words, strategy forms the plan of the war, maps out the proposed course of the different campaigns which compose the war, and regulates the battles to be fought in each.'

One defect of this definition is that it intrudes on the sphere of policy, or the higher conduct of the war, which must necessarily be the responsibility of the government and not of the military leaders it employs as its agents in the executive control of operations. Another defect is that it narrows the meaning of 'strategy' to the pure utilization of battle, thus conveying the idea that battle is the only means to the strategical end. It was an easy step for his less profound disciples to confuse the means with the end, and to reach the conclusion that in war every other consideration should be subordinated to the aim of fighting a decisive battle.

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Relation to Policy

To break down the distinction between strategy and policy would not matter much if the two functions were normally combined in the same person, as with a Frederick or a Napoleon. But as such autocratic soldier-rulers have long been rare, and became temporarily extinct in the nineteenth century, the effect was insidiously harmful. For it encouraged soldiers to make the preposterous claim that policy should be subservient to their conduct of operations and, especially in democratic countries, it drew the statesman on to overstep the indefinite border of his sphere and interfere with his military employee in the actual use of his tools.

Moltke reached a clearer, and wiser, definition in terming strategy 'the practical adaptation of the means placed at a general's disposal to the attainment of the object in view'. This definition fixes the responsibility of a military commander to the government by which he is employed. His responsibility is that of applying most profitably to the interest of the higher war policy the force allotted to him within the theatre of operations assigned to him. If he considers that the force allotted is inadequate for the task indicated he is justified in pointing this out, and if his opinion is overruled he can refuse or resign the command; but he exceeds his rightful sphere if he attempts to dictate to the government what measure of force should be placed at his disposal.

On the other hand, the government, which formulates war policy, and has to adapt it to conditions which often change as a war progresses, can rightly intervene in the strategy of a campaign not merely by replacing a commander in whom it has lost confidence, but by modifying his object according to the needs of its war policy. While it should not interfere with

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him in the handling of his tools, it should indicate clearly the nature of his task. Thus strategy has not necessarily the simple object of seeking to overthrow the enemy's military power. When a government appreciates that the enemy has the military superiority, either in general or in a particular theatre, it may wisely enjoin a strategy of limited aim.

It may desire to wait until the balance of force can be changed by the intervention of allies or by the transfer of forces from another theatre. It may desire to wait, or even to limit its military effort permanently, while economic or naval action decides the issue. It may calculate that the overthrow of the enemy's military power is a task definitely beyond its capacity, or not worth the effort—and that the object of its war policy can be assured by seizing territory which it can either retain or use as bargaining counters when peace is negotiated. Such a policy has more support from history than military opinion hitherto has recognized, and is less inherently a policy of weakness than its apologists imply. It is, indeed, bound up with the history of the British Empire, and has repeatedly proved a lifebuoy to Britain's allies as well as of permanent benefit to herself. However unconsciously followed, there is ground for inquiry whether this 'conservative' military policy does not deserve to be accorded a place in the theory of the conduct of war.

The more usual reason for adopting a strategy of limited aim is that of awaiting a change in the balance of force, a change often sought and achieved by draining the enemy's force, weakening him by pricks instead of risking blows. The essential condition of such a strategy is that the drain on him should be disproportionately greater than on yourself. The object may be sought by raiding his supplies, by local attacks which annihilate or inflict disproportionate loss on

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parts of his force, by luring him into unprofitable attacks, by causing an excessively wide distribution of his force and, not least, by exhausting his moral and physical energy.

This closer definition sheds light on the question, previously raised, of a general's independence in carrying out his own strategy inside his theatre of operations. For if the government has decided upon a 'Fabian' war policy the general who, even within his strategic sphere, seeks to overthrow the enemy's military power may do more harm than good to the government's war policy. Usually, a war policy of limited aim imposes a strategy of limited aim, and a decisive aim should only be adopted with the approval of the government which alone can decide whether it is 'worth the candle'.

We can now arrive at a shorter definition of strategy as—'the art of distributing military means to fulfil the ends of policy'. For strategy is concerned not merely with the movement of armies—as its role is often defined—but with the effect. When the application of the military instrument merges into actual fighting, the dispositions for and control of such direct action are termed 'tactics'. The two categories, however, although convenient for discussion, can never be truly divided into separate compartments because each not only influences but merges into the other.

As tactics is an application of strategy on a lower plane, so strategy is an application on a lower plane of 'grand strategy'. If practically synonymous with the policy which governs the conduct of war, as distinct from the permanent policy which formulates its object, the term 'grand strategy' serves to bring out the sense of 'policy in execution'. For the role of grand strategy is to co-ordinate and direct all the resources of a nation towards the attainment of the political

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object of the war—the goal defined by national policy. Grand strategy should both calculate and develop the economic resources and man-power of the nation in order to sustain the fighting services. So also with the moral resources—for to foster the willing spirit of a people is as important as to possess the more concrete forms of power. Grand strategy, too, should regulate the distribution of power between the several services, and between the services and industry. And fighting power is but one of the instruments of grand strategy. This should take account and apply the power of financial pressure, diplomatic pressure, commercial pressure, and, not least, ethical pressure, to weaken the opponent's will. A good cause is a sword as well as a buckler.

Furthermore, while the horizon of strategy is bounded by the war, grand strategy looks beyond the war to the subsequent peace. It should not only combine the various instruments, but so regulate their use as to avoid damage to the future state of peacefulness, secure and prosperous. The sorry state of peace, for both sides, that has followed most wars can be traced to the fact that, unlike strategy, the realm of grand strategy is for the most part *terra incognita*—still awaiting exploration, and understanding.

Pure Strategy

Having cleared the ground, we can build up our conception of strategy on its original and true basis—that of 'the art of the general'. This depends for success, first and most, on a sound *calculation and co-ordination of the end and the means*. The end must be proportioned to the total means, and the means used in gaining each intermediate end which contributes to the ultimate must be proportioned to the value and needs of that intermediate end—whether it be to gain

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an objective or to fulfil a contributory purpose. An excess may be as harmful as a deficiency. A true adjustment would establish a perfect *economy of force*, in the deeper sense of that oft-distorted military term. But, because of the nature and uncertainty of war, an uncertainty aggravated by its unscientific study, a true adjustment is beyond the power of military genius even, and success lies in the closest approximation to truth.

This relativity is inherent because, however far our knowledge of the science of war be extended, it will depend on art for its application. Art can not only bring the end nearer to the means, but by giving a higher value to the means, enable the end to be extended. This complicates calculation, because no man can exactly calculate the capacity of human genius and stupidity, nor the incapacity of will.

Elements and Conditions

Nevertheless, in strategy calculation is simpler and a closer approximation to truth possible than in tactics. For in war the chief incalculable is the human will, which manifests itself in resistance, which in turn lies in the province of tactics. Strategy has not to overcome resistance, except from nature. *Its purpose is to diminish the possibility of resistance*, and it seeks to fulfil this purpose by exploiting the elements of *movement* and *surprise*. Movement lies in the physical sphere, and depends on a calculation of the conditions of time, topography, and transport capacity. By transport capacity is meant both the means by which, and the measure in which, force can be moved and maintained.

Surprise lies in the psychological sphere and depends on a calculation, far more difficult than in the physical sphere, of the manifold conditions, varying

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in each case, which are likely to affect the will of the opponent.

Although strategy may aim more at exploiting movement than at exploiting surprise, or conversely, yet the two elements react on each other. Movement generates surprise, and surprise gives impetus to movement. For a movement which is accelerated or changes its direction inevitably carries with it a degree of surprise, even though it be unconcealed ; while surprise smooths the path of movement by hindering the enemy's counter-measures and counter-movements.

As regards the relation of strategy to tactics, while in execution the borderline is often shadowy, and it is difficult to decide exactly where a strategical movement ends and a tactical movement begins, yet in conception the two are distinct. Tactics lies in and fills the province of fighting. Strategy not only stops on the frontier, but has for its purpose the reduction of fighting to the slenderest possible proportions.

Aim of Strategy

This statement may be disputed by those who conceive the destruction of the enemy's armed force as the only sound aim in war, who hold that the only goal of strategy is battle, and who are obsessed with the Clausewitzian saying that 'blood is the price of victory'. Yet if one should concede this point and meet its advocates on their own ground, the statement would remain unshaken. For even if a decisive battle be the only goal, all recognize that the object of strategy is to bring about this battle under the most advantageous circumstances. And the more advantageous the circumstances, the less, proportionately, will be the fighting.

The perfection of strategy would, therefore, be to produce a decision without any serious fighting. His-

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tory, as we have seen, provides examples where strategy, helped by favourable conditions, has practically produced such a result—among them Caesar's Ilerda campaign, Cromwell's Preston campaign, and Napoleon's Ulm campaign. More recent examples are Moltke's success in surrounding MacMahon's army at Sedan in 1870, and the way that Allenby in 1918 surrounded the Turks in the hills of Samaria, closing every bolt-hole.¹

While these were cases where the destruction of the enemy's armed forces was economically achieved through their disarming by surrender, such 'destruction' may not be essential for a decision, and for the fulfilment of the war-aim. In the case of a State that is seeking, not conquest, but the maintenance of its security, the aim is fulfilled if the threat be removed—if the enemy is led to abandon his purpose. The defeat which Belisarius incurred at Sura through giving rein to his troops' desire for a 'decisive victory'—after the Persians had already given up their attempted invasion of Syria—was a clear example of unnecessary effort and risk. By contrast, the way that he defeated their far more dangerous later invasion, and cleared them out of Syria, is perhaps the most striking example on record of achieving a decision—in the real sense, of fulfilling the national object—by pure strategy. For in this case, the psychological action was so effective that the enemy surrendered his purpose without any physical action at all being required. While such bloodless victories have been exceptional, their rarity should enhance rather than detract from their value—as an indication of latent potentialities, in strategy and grand strategy. Despite many centuries' experience of

¹ Still more recent examples have been provided by the Germans' success in cutting off the Allied armies in Belgium, and by Wavell's campaign in Libya.

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war, we have hardly begun to explore the field of psychological warfare.

From deep study of war, Clausewitz was led to the conclusion that—‘All military action is permeated by intelligent forces and their effects.’ Nevertheless, nations at war have always striven, or been driven by their passions, to disregard the implications of such a conclusion. Instead of applying intelligence, they have chosen to batter their heads against the nearest wall.

It rests normally with the government, responsible for the grand strategy of a war, to decide whether strategy should make its contribution by achieving a military decision or otherwise. And just as the military is but one of the means to the end of grand strategy—one of the instruments in the surgeon’s case—so battle is but one of the means to the end of strategy. If the conditions are suitable, it is usually the quickest in effect, but if the conditions are unfavourable it is folly to use it. Let us assume that a strategist is empowered to seek a military decision. His responsibility is to seek it under the most advantageous circumstances in order to produce the most profitable result. Hence *his true aim is not so much to seek battle as to seek a strategic situation so advantageous that if it does not of itself produce the decision, its continuation by a battle is sure to achieve this*. In other words, dislocation is the aim of strategy; its sequel may be either the enemy’s dissolution or his disruption in battle. Dissolution may involve some partial measure of fighting, but this has not the character of a battle.

Action of Strategy

How is the strategic dislocation produced? In the physical, or ‘logistical’, sphere it is the result of a

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move which (a) upsets the enemy's dispositions and, by compelling a sudden 'change of front', dislocates the distribution and organization of his forces; (b) separates his forces; (c) endangers his supplies; (d) menaces the route or routes by which he could retreat in case of need and re-establish himself in his base or homeland. A dislocation may be produced by one of these effects, but is more often the consequence of several. Differentiation, indeed, is difficult because a move directed towards the enemy's rear tends to combine these effects. Their respective influence, however, varies and has varied throughout history according to the size of armies and the complexity of their organization. With armies which 'live on the country', drawing their supplies locally by plunder or requisition, the line of communication has negligible importance. Even in a higher stage of military development, the smaller a force is, the less dependent it is on the line of communication for supplies. The larger an army, and the more complex its organization, the more prompt and serious in effect is a menace to its line of communication.

Where armies have not been so dependent, strategy has been correspondingly handicapped, and the tactical issue of battle has played a greater part. Nevertheless, even thus handicapped, strategic artists have frequently gained a decisive advantage previous to battle by menacing the enemy's line of retreat, the equilibrium of his dispositions, or his local supplies.

To be effective, such a menace must usually be applied at a point closer, in time and space, to the enemy's army than a menace to his communications; and thus in early warfare it is often difficult to distinguish between the strategical and tactical manoeuvre.

In the psychological sphere, dislocation is the result

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of the impression on the commander's mind of the physical effects which we have listed. The impression is strongly accentuated if his realization of his being at a disadvantage is *sudden*, and if he feels that he is unable to counter the enemy's move. In fact, *psychological dislocation fundamentally springs from this sense of being trapped*. This is the reason why it has most frequently followed a physical move on to the enemy's rear. An army, like a man, cannot properly defend its back from a blow without turning round to use its arms in the new direction. 'Turning' temporarily unbalances an army as it does a man, and with the former the period of instability is inevitably much longer. In consequence, the brain is much more sensitive to any menace to its back. In contrast, to move directly on an opponent is to consolidate his equilibrium, physical and psychological, and by consolidating it to augment his resisting power. For in the case of an army it rolls the enemy back towards their reserves, supplies, and reinforcements, so that as the original front is worn thin new layers are added to the back. And, at best, it imposes a strain rather than producing a shock.

Thus a move round the enemy's front against his rear has the aim not only of avoiding resistance on its way but in its issue. In the profoundest sense, it takes the *line of least resistance*. The equivalent in the psychological sphere is the *line of least expectation*. They are the two faces of the same coin, and to appreciate this is to widen our understanding of strategy. For if we merely take what obviously appears the line of least resistance, its obviousness will appeal to the opponent also: and this line may no longer be that of least resistance. In studying the physical aspect we must never lose sight of the psychological, and only when both are combined is the strategy truly an in-

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direct approach, calculated to dislocate the opponent's equilibrium.

Thus we see that the mere fact of marching indirectly towards the enemy and on to the rear of his dispositions does not constitute a strategic indirect approach. Strategic art is not so simple. Such an approach may start by being indirect in relation to the enemy's front, but by the very directness of its progress towards his rear may allow him to change his dispositions so that it soon becomes a direct approach to his new front.

Because of the risk that the enemy may achieve such a change of front, it is usual, and usually necessary, for the dislocating move to be preceded by a move, or moves, which can perhaps best be classified under the term 'distract' in its literal sense of 'to draw asunder'. The purpose of this 'distraction' is to deprive the enemy of his freedom of action, and it should operate in both the physical and psychological spheres. In the physical, by causing a distension of his forces or their diversion to unprofitable ends, so that they are too widely distributed, and too committed elsewhere, to have the power of interfering with one's own decisively intended move. In the psychological sphere, the same effect is sought by playing upon the fears of, and by deceiving, the opposing command. 'Stonewall' Jackson realized this when he framed his strategical motto—'Mystify, mislead, and surprise'. For to mystify and to mislead constitutes 'distraction', while surprise is the essential cause of 'dislocation'. And it is through the 'distraction' of the commander's mind that the distraction of his forces follows. The loss of his freedom of action is the sequel to the loss of his freedom of conception.

A more profound appreciation of how the psychological permeates and dominates the physical sphere

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has an indirect value. For it warns us of the fallacy and shallowness of attempting to analyse and theorize about strategy in terms of mathematics. To treat it quantitatively, as if the issue turned merely on a superior concentration of force at a selected place, is as faulty as to treat it geometrically: as a question of lines and angles.

Even more remote from truth—because in practice it usually leads to a dead end—is the ‘grooved’ tendency, especially characteristic of modern text-books, to treat war as mainly a matter of concentrating superior force. In his celebrated definition of economy of force Foch termed it—‘The art of pouring out *all* one’s resources at a given moment on one spot; of making use there of *all* troops, and, to make such a thing possible, of making those troops permanently communicate with each other, instead of dividing them and attaching to each fraction some fixed and invariable function; its second part, a result having been attained, is the art of again so disposing the troops as to converge upon, and act against, a new single objective.’

It would have been more exact, and perhaps more lucid, to say that an army should always be so distributed that its parts can aid each other and combine to produce the maximum *possible* concentration of force at one place, while the minimum force *necessary* is used elsewhere to prepare the success of the concentration.

To concentrate *all* is an unrealizable ideal. And dangerous even as a hyperbole. Moreover, in practice the ‘minimum necessary’ may form a far larger proportion of the total than the ‘maximum possible’. It would even be true to say that the larger the force that is effectively used for *distraction* of the enemy, the greater is the chance of the concentration succeeding

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in its aim. For otherwise it may strike an object too solid to be shattered. Superior weight at the intended decisive point does not suffice unless that point cannot be reinforced *in time* by the opponent. It rarely suffices unless that point is not merely weaker numerically but has been weakened morally. Napoleon suffered some of his worst checks because he neglected this guarantee. And the need for distraction has grown with the delaying power of weapons.

Basis of Strategy

A deeper truth to which Foch and the other disciples of Clausewitz did not penetrate fully is that in war every problem, and every principle, is a duality. Like a coin, it has two faces. Hence the need for a well-calculated compromise as a means to reconciliation. This is the inevitable consequence of the fact that war is a two-party affair, so imposing the need that while hitting one must guard. Its corollary is that, in order to hit with effect, the enemy must be taken off his guard. Effective concentration can only be obtained when the opposing forces are dispersed; and, usually, in order to ensure this, one's own forces must be widely distributed. Thus, by an outward paradox, true concentration is the product of dispersion.

A further consequence of the two-party condition is that to ensure reaching an objective one should have *alternative objectives*. Herein lies a vital contrast to the single-minded nineteenth-century doctrine of Foch and his fellows—a contrast of the practical to the theoretical. For if the enemy is certain as to your point of aim he has the best possible chance of guarding himself—and blunting your weapon. If, on the other hand, you take a line that threatens alternative objectives, you distract his mind and forces. This, moreover, is the most economic method of *distraction*, for it al-

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lows you to keep the largest proportion of your force available on your real line of operation—thus reconciling the greatest possible concentration with the necessity of dispersion.

The absence of an alternative is contrary to the very nature of war. It sins against the light which Bourcet shed in the eighteenth century by his most penetrating dictum that 'every plan of campaign ought to have several branches and to have been so well thought out that one or other of the said branches cannot fail of success'. This was the light that his military heir, the young Napoleon Bonaparte, followed in seeking always, as he said, to '*faire son thème en deux façons*'. Seventy years later Sherman was to re-learn the lesson from experience, by reflection, and to coin his famous maxim about 'putting the enemy on the horns of a dilemma'. In any problem where an opposing force exists, and cannot be regulated, one must foresee and provide for alternative courses. Adaptability is the law which governs survival in war as in life—war being but a concentrated form of the human struggle against environment.

To be practical, any plan must take account of the enemy's power to frustrate it; the best chance of overcoming such obstruction is to have a plan that can be easily varied to fit the circumstances met; to keep such adaptability, while still keeping the initiative, the best way is to operate along a line which offers alternative objectives. For thereby you put your opponent on the horns of a dilemma, which goes far to assure the gaining of at least one objective—whichever is least guarded—and may enable you to gain one after the other. In the tactical field, where the enemy's dispositions are likely to be based on the nature of the ground, it may be more difficult to find a choice of dilemma-producing objectives than it is in the strategical field,

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where the enemy will have obvious industrial and railway centres to cover. But you can gain a similar advantage by adapting your line of effort to the degree of resistance that is met, and exploiting any weakness that is found. A plan, like a tree, must have branches—if it is to bear fruit. A plan with a single aim is apt to prove a barren pole.

Cutting Communications

In the planning of any stroke at the enemy's communications, either by manœuvre round his flank or by rapid penetration of a breach in his front, the question will arise as to the most effective point of aim—whether it should be directed against the immediate rear of the opposing force, or further back. Some guidance on the question can be obtained from analysis of cavalry raids carried out in the past, especially in the more recent wars since railways came into use. While such cavalry raids had more limited potentialities than an inroad of modern mechanized forces, this difference emphasizes rather than detracts from the significance of the evidence which they provide. Making the necessary adjustment, the following deductions can be drawn:

In general, the nearer to the force that the cut is made, the *more immediate* the effect; the nearer to the base, the *greater* the effect. In either case, the effect is much greater and more quickly felt if made against a force that is in motion, and in course of carrying out an operation, than against a force that is stationary.

In deciding the direction of a mobile stroke, much depends on the strategic position and supply conditions of the enemy forces, i.e. the number of their lines of supply, the possibility of adopting alternative lines of supply, the amount of supplies likely to be accumulated in advanced depots close behind their front.

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After these factors have been considered, they should be reconsidered in the light of the *accessibility* of the various possible objectives, i.e., the distance, the natural obstacles, and the opposition likely to be met. In general, the longer the distance that has to be covered, the greater the ratio of natural obstacles, but the less the ratio of opposition.

Thus, unless the natural obstacles are very severe, or the enemy has unusual independence of supplies from base, more success and more effect is to be expected from cutting his communications as far back as possible. A further consideration is that while a stroke close in rear of the enemy force may have more effect on the minds of the enemy troops, a stroke far back tends to have more effect on the mind of the enemy commander.

Cavalry raids in the past often forfeited their effect by lack of care in carrying out the demolition side of their task. As a result the prospective value of mobile raids on communications has been unduly discounted. It is apt to be forgotten that the flow of supplies may be interrupted not only by demolitions on the route, but by actual or threatened interception of trains and lorry convoys. The latter form of interruption is increased in potentiality by the development of mechanized forces (because of their fluidity).

The Method of Advance

Until the end of the eighteenth century, a physically concentrated advance, both strategic (*to* the battlefield) and tactical (*on* the battlefield) was the rule. Then Napoleon, exploiting Bourcet's ideas and the new divisional system, introduced a *distributed* strategic advance—the army moving in independent fractions. But the tactical advance was still, in general, a concentrated one.

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Towards the end of the nineteenth century, with the development of fire weapons, the tactical advance became dispersed, i.e., in particles, to diminish the effect of fire. But the strategic advance had again become concentrated—this was due partly to the growth of masses, and partly to the misunderstanding of the Napoleonic method.

To-day we must recognize the need of reviving the distributed strategic advance, if there is to be any chance of reviving the art and effect of strategy. But two new conditions—air power and motor power—seem to point to its further development into a *dispersed strategic advance*. The danger of air attack, the aim of mystification, and the need of drawing full value from mechanized mobility, suggest that advancing forces should not only be distributed as widely as is compatible with combined action, but be dispersed as much as is compatible with cohesion. And the development of wireless is a timely aid towards reconciling dispersion with control.

Instead of the simple idea of a concentrated stroke by a concentrated force, we must choose according to circumstance between these variants :

- (i) Dispersed advance with concentrated single aim, i.e. against one objective.
 - (ii) Dispersed advance with concentrated serial aim, i.e. against successive objectives.
- (These will each demand preliminary moves to distract the enemy's attention and forces, unless the possibility of taking alternative objectives enables us to rely on such distracting effect being produced already by the enemy's perplexity.)
- (iii) Dispersed advance with distributed aim, i.e. against a number of objectives simultaneously.
- (Under the new conditions of warfare, it may happen that the *cumulative* effect of partial success, or even

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mere threat, at a number of points may be greater than the effect of complete success at one point.)

The prospect of reviving the effectiveness of armies, except in mere protectiveness, lies in the development of such new methods: methods which aim at permeating and dominating areas rather than capturing lines; at the practicable object of paralysing the enemy's action rather than the theoretical object of crushing his forces. Fluidity of force may succeed where concentration of force merely entails a helpless rigidity.

Grand Strategy

This book is concerned with strategy, rather than with grand strategy—or war policy. To deal adequately with this wider subject would require not only a much larger volume, but a separate volume—for while grand strategy should control strategy, its principles often run counter to those which prevail in the field of strategy. For that very reason, however, it is desirable to include here some indication of the deeper conclusions to which a study of grand strategy leads.

Whereas strategy is only concerned with the problem of 'winning the war', grand strategy must take a longer view—for its problem is the winning of the peace. Such an order of thought is not a matter of 'putting the cart before the horse', but of being clear as to where the horse and cart are going.

The object in war is to attain a better peace—even if only from your own point of view. Hence it is essential to conduct war with constant regard to the peace you desire. This is the truth underlying Clausewitz's definition of war as 'a continuation of policy by other means'—the prolongation of that policy through the war into the subsequent peace must always be borne in mind. A State which expends its strength to the

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point of exhaustion bankrupts its own policy, and future.

If you concentrate exclusively on victory, with no thought for the after-effect, you may be too exhausted to profit by the peace, while it is almost certain that the peace will be a bad one, containing the germs of another war. This is a lesson supported by abundant experience. The risks become greater still in any war that is waged by a coalition. For in such a case a too complete victory inevitably complicates the problem of making a just and wise peace settlement. Where there is no longer the counter-balance of an opposing force to control the appetites of the victors, there is no check on the conflict of views and interests between the parties to the alliance. The divergence is then apt to become so acute as to turn the comradeship of common danger into the hostility of mutual dissatisfaction—so that the ally of one war becomes the enemy in the next.

This raises a further and wider question. The friction that commonly develops in any alliance system, especially when it has no balancing force, has been one of the factors that have fostered the numerous attempts throughout history to find a solution in fusion. But history teaches us that in practice this is apt to mean domination by one of the constituent elements. And though there is a natural tendency towards the fusion of small groups in larger ones, the usual result of forcing the pace is the confusion of the plans to establish such a comprehensive political unit.

Moreover, regrettable as it may seem to the idealist, the experience of history provides little warrant for the belief that real progress, and the freedom that makes progress possible, lies in unification. For where unification has been able to establish unity of ideas

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it has usually ended in uniformity, paralysing the growth of new ideas. And where the unification has merely brought about an artificial or imposed unity, its irksomeness has led through discord to disruption.

Vitality springs from diversity—which makes for real progress so long as there is mutual toleration, based on the recognition that worse may come from an attempt to suppress differences than from acceptance of them. For this reason, the kind of peace that makes progress possible is best assured by the mutual checks created by a balance of forces—alike in the sphere of internal politics and of international relations. In the former sphere, the experience of the two-party system in English politics continued long enough to show its practical superiority, whatever its theoretical drawbacks, to any other system of government that has yet been tried. In the international sphere, the ‘balance of power’ was a sound theory so long as the balance was preserved. But the frequency with which the European ‘balance of power’ has become unbalanced, thereby precipitating war, has produced a growing urge to find a more stable solution: either by fusion or federation. Federation is the more hopeful method, since it embodies the life-giving principle of co-operation, whereas fusion encourages the monopolizing of power by a single political interest. And any monopoly of power leads to ever-repeated demonstration of the historical truth epitomized in Lord Acton’s famous dictum—‘All power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.’ From that danger even a federation is not immune, so that the greatest care should be taken to ensure the mutual checks and balancing factors necessary to correct the natural effect of constitutional unity.

Another conclusion which develops from the study

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of grand strategy (national war-policy), against the background of history, is the practical necessity of adapting the general theory of strategy to the nature of a nation's fundamental policy. There is an essential difference of aim, and must be a consequent difference of appropriate method, between an 'acquisitive' and a 'conservative' State. In the light of this difference it becomes clear that the pure theory of strategy, as outlined earlier in this chapter, best fits the case of a State that is primarily concerned with conquest. It has to be modified if it is to serve the true purpose of a nation that is content with its existing territorial bounds, and primarily concerned to preserve its security and maintain its way of life. The acquisitive State, inherently unsatisfied, needs to gain victory in order to gain its object—and must therefore court greater risks in the attempt. The conservative State can achieve its object by merely inducing the aggressor to drop his attempt at conquest—by convincing him that 'the game is not worth the candle'. Its victory is, in a real sense, attained by foiling the other side's bid for victory. Indeed, in attempting more it may defeat its own purpose—by exhausting itself so much that it is unable to resist other enemies, or the internal effects of overstrain. Self-exhaustion in war has killed more States than any foreign assailant.

Weighing these factors of the problem, it can be seen that the problem of a conservative State is to find the type of strategy that is suited to fulfil its inherently more limited object in the most strength-conserving war—so as to insure its future as well as its present. At first glance, it might seem that pure defence would be the most economical method; but this implies static defence—and historical experience warns us that this is a dangerously brittle method on which to rely. Economy of force and deterrent effect

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are best combined in the defensive-offensive method, based on high mobility that carries the power of quick riposte. The East Roman Empire was a case where such an actively 'conservative' strategy had been carefully thought out, as a basis of war-policy—a fact which goes far to explain its unrivalled span of existence. Another example, more instinctive than reasoned, is provided by the strategy, based on sea-power, that England practised in her wars from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. The value of it was shown by the way that her strength kept pace with her growth, while all her rivals broke down in turn through self-exhaustion in war—traceable to their immoderate desire for the immediate satisfaction of outright victory.

A long series of mutually exhausting and devastating wars, above all the Thirty Years' War, had brought statesmen in the eighteenth century to realize the necessity, when engaged in war, of curbing both their ambitions and their passions in the interests of their purpose. On the one hand, this realization tended to produce a tacit limitation of warfare—an avoidance of excesses which might damage after-the-war prospects. On the other hand, it made them more ready to negotiate a peace if and when victory came to appear dubious of achievement. Their ambitions and passions frequently carried them too far, so that the return to peace found their countries weakened rather than strengthened, but they had learnt to stop short of national exhaustion. And the most satisfactory peace settlements, even for the stronger side, proved to be those which were made by negotiation rather than by a decisive military issue.

This gradual education in the inherent limitations of war was still in process when it was interrupted by

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the French Revolution, bringing to the top men who were novices in statesmanship. The Directory and its successor, Napoleon, pursued the vision of an enduring peace through war after war for twenty years. The pursuit never led to the goal, but only to spreading exhaustion and ultimate collapse.

The bankruptcy of the Napoleonic Empire renewed a lesson that had often been taught before. The impression, however, came to be obscured by the sunset haze of Napoleonic myth. The lesson had been forgotten by the time it was repeated in the war of 1914-18.

Although war is contrary to reason, since it is a means of deciding issues by force when discussion fails to produce an agreed solution, the conduct of war must be controlled by reason if its object is to be fulfilled. For—

(1) While fighting is a physical act, its direction is a mental process. The better your strategy, the easier you will gain the upper hand, and the less it will cost you.

(2) Conversely, the more strength you waste the more you increase the risk of the scales of war turning against you; and even if you succeed in winning the victory, the less strength you will have to profit by the peace.

(3) The more brutal your methods the more bitter you will make your opponents, with the natural result of hardening the resistance you are trying to overcome; thus the more evenly the two sides are matched the wiser it will be to avoid extremes of violence which tend to consolidate the enemy's troops and people behind their leaders.

(4) These calculations extend further. The more intent you appear to impose a peace entirely of your own choosing, by conquest, the stiffer the obstacle you will raise in your path.

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(5) Furthermore, if and when you reach your military goal, the more you ask of the defeated side the more trouble you will have, and the more cause you will provide for an ultimate attempt to reverse the settlement achieved by the war.

Force is a vicious circle, or rather, a spiral—unless its application is controlled by the more carefully reasoned calculation. Thus war, which begins by denying reason, comes to vindicate it—throughout all phases of the struggle.

The fighting instinct is necessary to success in the battlefield—although even here the combatant who can keep a cool head has an advantage over the man who ‘sees red’—but should always be ridden on a tight rein. The statesman who gives that instinct its head loses his own; he is not fit to take charge of the fate of a nation.

Victory in the true sense implies that the state or peace, and of one’s people, is better after the war than before. Victory in this sense is only possible if a quick result can be gained or if a long effort can be economically proportioned to the national resources. The end must be adjusted to the means. Failing a fair prospect of such a victory, wise statesmanship will miss no opportunity for negotiating peace. Peace through stalemate, based on a coincident recognition by each side of the opponent’s strength, is at least preferable to peace through common exhaustion—and has often provided a better foundation for lasting peace.

It is wiser to run risks *of* war for the sake of preserving peace than to run risks of exhaustion *in* war for the sake of finishing with victory—a conclusion that runs counter to custom but is supported by experience. Perseverance in war is only justifiable if there is a good chance of a good end—the prospect of a

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peace that will balance the sum of human misery incurred in the struggle. Indeed, deepening study of past experience leads to the conclusion that nations might often have come nearer to their object by taking advantage of a lull in the struggle to discuss a settlement than by pursuing the war with the aim of 'victory'.

History reveals, also, that in many cases a beneficial peace could have been obtained if the statesmen of the warring nations had shown more understanding of the elements of psychology in their peace 'feelers'. Their attitude has commonly been too akin to that seen in the typical domestic quarrel; each party is afraid to appear yielding, with the result that when one of them shows any inclination towards conciliation this is usually expressed in language that is too stiff, while the other is apt to be slow to respond—partly from pride or obstinacy and partly from a tendency to interpret such a gesture as a sign of weakening when it may be a sign of returning commonsense. Thus the fateful moment passes, and the conflict continues—to the common damage. Rarely does a continuation serve any good purpose where the two parties are bound to go on living under the same roof. This applies even more to modern war in Europe than to a domestic conflict, since the industrialization of nations has made their fortunes inseparable. It is the responsibility of statesmanship never to lose sight of the post-war prospect in chasing the 'mirage of victory'.

Where the two sides are too evenly matched to offer a reasonable chance of early success to either, the statesman is wise who can learn something from the psychology of strategy. It is an elementary principle of strategy that, if you find your opponent in a strong position costly to force, you should leave him a line of retreat—as the quickest way of loosening his resis-

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tance. It should, equally, be a principle of policy, especially in war, to provide your opponent with a ladder by which he can climb down.

The question may arise as to whether such conclusions, based on the history of war between so-called civilized States, apply to the conditions inherent in a renewal of the type of purely predatory war that was waged by the barbarian assailants of the Roman Empire, or the mixed religious and predatory war that was pursued by the fanatical followers of Mahomet. In such wars any negotiated peace tends to have in itself even less than the normal value (it is only too clear from history that States rarely keep faith with each other, save in so far, and so long, as their promises seem to them to combine with their interests). But the less that a nation has regard for moral obligations the more it tends to respect physical strength—the deterrent power of a force too strong to be challenged with impunity. In the same way, with individuals it is a matter of common experience that the bully-type and the robber-type hesitate to assail anyone who approaches their own strength—and are far more reluctant to attempt this than a peaceful type of individual is to tackle an assailant bigger than himself.

It is folly to imagine that the aggressive types, whether individuals or nations, can be bought off—or, in modern language, ‘appeased’—since the payment of danegeld stimulates a demand for more danegeld. But they can be curbed. Their very belief in force makes them more susceptible to the deterrent effect of a formidable opposing force. This forms an adequate check except against pure fanaticism—a fanaticism that is unmingled with acquisitiveness.

While it is hard to make a real peace with the predatory types, it is easier to induce them to accept a

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state of truce—and far less exhausting than an attempt to crush them, whereby they are, like all types of mankind, infused with the courage of desperation. The experience of history brings ample evidence that the downfall of civilized States tends to come not from the direct assaults of foes but from internal decay, combined with the consequences of exhaustion in war. A state of suspense is trying—it has often led nations as well as individuals to commit suicide because they were unable to bear it. But it is better than to reach exhaustion in pursuit of the mirage of victory. Moreover, a truce to actual hostilities enables a recovery and development of strength, while the need for vigilance helps to keep a nation 'on its toes'.

Peaceful nations are apt, however, to court unnecessary danger because, when once aroused, they are more inclined to proceed to extremes than predatory nations. For the latter, making war as a means of gain, are usually more ready to call it off when they find an opponent too strong to be easily overcome. It is the reluctant fighter, impelled by emotion and not by calculation, who tends to press a fight to the bitter end. Thereby he too often defeats his own end, even if he does not produce his own direct defeat. For the spirit of barbarism can be weakened only during a cessation of hostilities; war strengthens it—pouring fuel on the flames.

Chapter XII

THE CONCENTRATED ESSENCE OF STRATEGY

This brief chapter is an attempt to epitomize, from the history of war, a few truths of experience which seem so universal, and so fundamental, as to be termed axioms.

They are practical guides, not abstract principles. Napoleon realized that only the practical is useful when he gave us his maxims. But the modern tendency has been to search for principles which can each be expressed in a single word—and then need several thousand words to explain them. Even so, these ‘principles’ are so abstract that they mean different things to different men, and, for any value, depend on the individual’s own understanding of war. The longer one continues the search for such omnipotent abstractions, the more do they appear a mirage, neither attainable nor useful—except as an intellectual exercise.

The principles of war, not merely one principle, can be condensed into a single word—‘concentration’. But for truth this needs to be amplified as the ‘concentration of strength against weakness’. And for any real value it needs to be explained that the concentration of strength against weakness depends on the dispersion of your opponent’s strength, which in turn is

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produced by a distribution of your own that gives the appearance, and partial effect of dispersion. Your dispersion, his dispersion, your concentration—such is the sequence, and each is a sequel. True concentration is the fruit of calculated dispersion.

Here we have a fundamental principle whose understanding may prevent a fundamental error (and the most common)—that of giving your opponent freedom and time to concentrate to meet your concentration. But to state the principle is not of much practical aid for execution.

The above-mentioned axioms (here expressed as maxims) cannot be condensed into a single word; but they can be put into the fewest words necessary to be practical. Eight in all, so far—six are positive and two negative. They apply to strategy as well as tactics, unless otherwise indicated.

Positive

1. *Adjust your end to your means.* In determining your object, clear sight and cool calculation should prevail. It is folly 'to bite off more than you can chew', and the beginning of military wisdom is a sense of what is possible. So learn to face facts while still preserving faith: there will be ample need for faith—the faith that can achieve the apparently impossible—when action begins. Confidence is like the current in a battery; avoid exhausting it in vain effort—and remember that your own continued confidence will be of no avail if the cells of your battery, the men upon whom you depend, have been run down.

2. *Keep your object always in mind,* while adapting your plan to circumstances. Realize that there are more ways than one of gaining an object, but take heed that every objective should bear on the object. And in considering possible objectives weigh their

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possibility of attainment with their service to the object if attained—to wander down a side-track is bad, but to reach a dead end is worse.

3. *Choose the line (or course) of least expectation.* Try to put yourself in the enemy's shoes, and think what course it is least probable he will foresee or forestall.

4. *Exploit the line of least resistance*—so long as it can lead you to any objective which would contribute to your underlying object. (In tactics this maxim applies to the use of your reserves; and in strategy, to the exploitation of any tactical success.)

5. *Take a line of operation which offers alternative objectives.* For you will thus put your opponent on the horns of a dilemma, which goes far to assure the chance of gaining one objective at least—whichever he guards least—and may enable you to gain one after the other.

Alternative objectives allow you to keep the opportunity of gaining *an* objective; a single objective, unless the enemy is helplessly inferior, means the certainty that you will not gain it—once the enemy is no longer uncertain as to your aim. There is no more common mistake than to confuse a single line of operation, which is usually wise, with a single objective, which is usually futile. (If this maxim applies mainly to strategy, it should be applied where possible to tactics, and does, in effect, form the basis of infiltration tactics.)

6. *Ensure that both plan and dispositions are flexible—adaptable to circumstances.* Your plan should foresee and provide for a next step in case of success or failure, or partial success—which is the most common case in war. Your dispositions (or formation) should be such as to allow this exploitation or adaptation in the shortest possible time.

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Negative

7. *Do not throw your weight into a stroke whilst your opponent is on guard*—whilst he is well placed to parry or evade it. The experience of history shows that, save against a much inferior opponent, no effective stroke is possible until his power of resistance or evasion is paralysed. Hence no commander should launch a real attack upon an enemy in position until satisfied that such paralysis has developed. It is produced by *disorganization*, and its moral equivalent, *demoralization*, of the enemy.

8. *Do not renew an attack along the same line (or in the same form) after it has once failed.* A mere reinforcement of weight is not sufficient change, for it is probable that the enemy also will have strengthened himself in the interval. It is even more probable that his success in repulsing you will have strengthened him morally.

The essential truth underlying these maxims is that, for success, two major problems must be solved—*dislocation* and *exploitation*. One precedes and one follows the actual blow, which in comparison is a simple act. You cannot hit the enemy with effect unless you have first created the opportunity; you cannot make that effect decisive unless you exploit the second opportunity that comes before he can recover.

The importance of these two problems has never been adequately recognized—a fact which may go far to explain the common indecisiveness of warfare. The training of armies is primarily devoted to developing efficiency in the detailed execution of the *attack*. This concentration on tactical technique, in peace-time exercises, tends to obscure the psychological element. It fosters a cult of soundness, rather than of surprise. It breeds commanders who are so intent not to do

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anything wrong, according to 'the book', that they forget the necessity of making the enemy do something wrong. The result is that their plans have no result. For, in war, it is by compelling mistakes that the scales are most often turned.

Here and there a commander has eschewed the obvious, and has found in the unexpected the key to a decision—unless fortune has proved foul. For luck can never be divorced from war, since war is part of life. Hence the unexpected cannot guarantee success. But it guarantees the best chance of success.

PART II

Chapter XIII

THE PLANS AND THEIR ISSUE IN THE WESTERN THEATRE, 1914

The starting-point of a survey of the Western Front campaign must be the pre-war plans. The Franco-German frontier was narrow, only some 150 miles long, and so afforded little room for the manœuvre of the masses which the conscriptive system had created and developed. At the south-eastern end the frontier abutted on Switzerland, and, after a short stretch of flat country near Belfort, ran for 70 miles along the Vosges mountains. Thence the line was prolonged by an almost continuous fortress chain based on Epinal, Toul, and Verdun; and just beyond the last-named lay the frontiers of Luxembourg and Belgium. In the resurrection and reconstruction period which followed the disasters of 1870, the French plan was that of an initial defensive, based on the frontier fortresses, to be followed by a decisive counterstroke. To this end the great fortress system along the Alsace-Lorraine frontier had been created, and gaps such as the Trouée de Charmes between Epinal and Toul had been left to 'canalize' the expected German invasion so that the counter might be delivered with more assurance and effectiveness.

This plan was marked by a certain indirectness of approach, perhaps as much as was possible in view

PLANS AND THEIR ISSUE IN WESTERN THEATRE of the restricted frontier—without violating neutral territory.

But in the decade before 1914 a new school of thought arose, with Colonel de Grandmaison as its prophet, which denounced this plan as contrary to the French spirit and as 'an almost complete atrophy of the idea of the offensive'. The advocates of the *offensive à outrance* found in Joffre, who was appointed Chief of the General Staff in 1912, a lever for their intentions. Grasping it, they gained control of the French military machine, and, throwing over the old plan, formulated the now famous, or notorious, Plan XVII. This was purely a direct approach in the form of a headlong offensive against the German centre 'with all forces united'. Yet, for this frontal and whole-front offensive, the French plan counted upon having a bare equality of strength against an enemy who would have the support of his own fortified frontier zone—while, by rushing forward, the French foreswore any advantage from their own. The one concession to historical experience, and common sense, in this plan was that the fortress of Metz should be masked, not directly assaulted—the attack passing south of it into Lorraine, and north of it also. The latter wing would extend the offensive into Belgian Luxembourg if the Germans violated neutral territory. By an historical paradox, the French plan drew its inspiration from a German, Clausewitz, while the German plan was far closer to the Napoleonic in origin—if still more Hannibalic.

Britain's contingent share in the French plan was settled less by calculation than by the 'Europeanization' of her military organization and thought during the previous decade. This continental influence drew her insensibly into a tacit acceptance of the role of an appendix to the French left wing, and away from her

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historic exploitation of the mobility given by sea-power. At the council of war on the outbreak, Sir John French, who was to command the British expeditionary force, expressed a doubt of 'the pre-arranged plan'; as an alternative, he suggested that the force should be sent to Antwerp—where it would have stiffened the Belgians' resistance and, by its mere situation, have threatened the rear flank of the German armies as they advanced through Belgium into France. But Major-General Henry Wilson, when Director of Military Operations, had virtually pledged the General Staff to act in direct conjunction with the French. The informal military negotiations between 1905 and 1914 had paved the way for a reversal of England's centuries-old war policy.

This *fait accompli* overbore not only French's strategical idea but Haig's desire to wait until the situation was clearer and the army could be enlarged, and even Kitchener's more limited objection to assembling the expeditionary force so close to the frontier.

The final French plan was the one thing needed to make the original German plan—framed by Graf von Schlieffen in 1905—a true indirect approach. Faced by the blank wall which the French fortified frontier presented, the logical military course was to go round it—through Belgium. Schlieffen decided on this course, and to move as widely as possible. Strangely, even when the invasion of Belgium began, the French command assumed that the Germans would confine their advance to a narrower front, east of the Meuse.

Schlieffen's plan concentrated the bulk of the German forces on the right wing for this gigantic wheel. The right wing was to sweep through Belgium and northern France, and then, continuing to traverse a vast arc, would wheel gradually east. With its extreme right passing south of Paris, and crossing the Seine

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near Rouen, it would thus press the French back towards the Moselle, where they would be hammered in rear on the anvil formed by the Lorraine fortresses and the Swiss frontier.

The real subtlety and indirectness of the plan lay, not in this geographical detour, but in the distribution of force and in the idea which guided it. An initial surprise was sought by incorporating reserve corps with active corps at the outset in the offensive mass. Of the 72 divisions which would thus be available, 53 were allotted to the swinging mass, 10 were to form a pivot facing Verdun, and a mere 9 were to form the left wing along the French frontier. This reduction of the left wing to the slenderest possible size was shrewdly calculated to increase the effect of the swinging mass by its very weakness. For if the French should attack in Lorraine and press the left wing back towards the Rhine, it would be difficult for them to parry the German attack through Belgium—and the further they went the more difficult it would be. As with a revolving door, if the French pressed heavily on one side, the other side would swing round and strike them in the back, and the more heavily they pressed the severer would be the blow.

Geographically, Schlieffen's move through Belgium was a strategic approach of very limited indirectness—because of the density of force in relation to space. Psychologically, his design for, and distribution of force on, the left wing made it a definitely indirect approach. And the French plan made it perfect. If a ghost can chuckle, how the departed Schlieffen must have chuckled when he saw that the French did not even have to be enticed into his trap. But his chuckle must soon have changed into chagrin. For his successor, Moltke—'the younger' in family order but the older in caution—abandoned Schlieffen's plan in exe-

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cution, after having already modified and marred it in pre-war preparation.

Between 1905 and 1914, as more troops became available, he increased the strength of the left wing disproportionately to the right. By making this wing safer, he made the plan unsafe, and began a continuous sapping at its foundations which ended in its collapse.

When the French offensive developed in August 1914, Moltke was tempted to accept the challenge in a direct manner, and to seek a decision in Lorraine, postponing the right wing's sweep. The impulse was only a momentary one, but in that brief lapse he had diverted to Lorraine the six newly formed Ersatz divisions which should have gone to increase the strength of his right wing. And this fresh accession of strength made the princeling commanders in Lorraine more loath to fulfil their self-suppressing role. Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria, instead of continuing to fall back and draw the French on, halted his army, ready to accept battle. Finding the French attack slow to develop, he arranged with his neighbour to anticipate it by a German attack. The two armies had now 25 divisions against 19, and thus lacked the superiority, as well as the strategic position, to make the counterstroke decisive. The result was merely to throw back the French on to their fortified barrier—and so, not only to restore and augment their power of resistance, but to enable them to dispatch troops westwards for the battle of the Marne.

The German action in Lorraine undermined Schlieffen's plan even more gravely, if less obviously, than the progressive reduction of the weight and role of the right wing. Here, however, came the immediate cause of the collapse. From the right wing Moltke subtracted, first, seven divisions to invest or stand guard over Maubeuge, Givet, and Antwerp; then four divi-

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sions to reinforce the East Prussian front. When Kluck's army on the extreme right wheeled in prematurely—on his neighbour's request and with Moltke's approval—and thereby presented a chance for the Paris garrison to catch him in flank, only 13 German divisions were available against 27 Franco-British divisions on this decisive flank. That fact brings out the extent to which Schlieffen's 'decisive wing' had been weakened—directly and indirectly. While the German inferiority was due to subtraction of force from the right wing, the French superiority was due to the misguided action of the German left wing.

Although with the battle of the Marne we cross the shadowy border-line between strategy and tactics, this battle, which turned the tide of the war, yields so many sidelights on the problem of the 'approach' that it deserves examination. For these sidelights to be reflected, a background of events is necessary.

The repulse of Joffre's right wing in Lorraine had been followed by the throwing back of his centre in a head-on crash in the Ardennes, and by the narrow escape of his left wing, belatedly extended, from a disastrous encirclement between the Sambre and the Meuse. With Plan XVII shattered to pieces, Joffre formed a new plan out of the wreckage. He decided to swing back his left and centre, with Verdun as the pivot, while drawing troops from his now firmly buttressed right wing to form a fresh 6th Army on his left.

On the German side, the first highly coloured reports from the army commanders in the battles of the Frontiers had given the German Supreme Command the impression of a decisive victory. Then the comparatively small totals of prisoners raised doubts in Moltke's mind, and led him to a more sober estimate of the situation. The new pessimism of Moltke com-

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combined with the renewed optimism of his army commanders to produce a fresh change of plan, which contained the seeds of disaster. When, on the 26th of August, the British left wing fell back southwards from Le Cateau, badly mauled, the German 1st Army, under Kluck, turned south-westwards again. If this direction was partly due to a misconception of the line of retreat taken by the British, it was also in accordance with Kluck's original role of a wide circling sweep. And by carrying him into the Amiens-Péronne area, where the first elements of the newly formed French 6th Army were just detraining after being switched from Lorraine, it compelled a hurried withdrawal of the 6th Army—and thus had the effect of dislocating Joffre's design for an early return to the offensive.

But Kluck had hardly swung out to the south-west before he was induced to swing in again. For, to ease the pressure on the British, Joffre had ordered the neighbouring army (Lanrezac) to halt and strike back at the pursuing German 2nd Army (Bülow), which, shaken by the threat, called on Kluck for aid. Lanrezac's attack, on the 29th of August, was stopped before this aid was needed; but Bülow asked Kluck to wheel inwards nevertheless, in order to cut off Lanrezac's retreat. Before acceding, Kluck referred to Moltke. The request came at a moment when Moltke was becoming perturbed, in general, over the way the French were slipping away from his embrace, and, in particular, over a gap which had opened between his 2nd and 3rd Armies. Hence Moltke approved Kluck's change of direction, which meant the abandonment of the original wide sweep round the far side of Paris. Now, the flank of the wheeling German line would pass the near side of Paris, and across the face of the Paris defences. By this contraction of his frontage and

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greater directness of approach, for the sake of security Moltke sacrificed the wider prospects inherent in the wide sweep of the Schlieffen plan. And, as it proved, instead of contracting the risk he contracted a fatal counterstroke.

The decision to abandon the original plan was definitely taken on the 4th of September, and in place of it Moltke substituted a narrower envelopment, of the French centre and right. His own centre (4th and 5th Armies) was to press south-east, while his left (6th and 7th Armies), striking south-westwards, sought to break through the fortified barrier between Toul and Epinal, the 'jaws' thus closing inwards on either side of Verdun. Meantime his right (1st and 2nd Armies) was to turn outwards, and, facing west, hold off any countermove which the French attempted from the neighbourhood of Paris.

But such a French countermove had begun before the newer plan could take effect.

The opportunity was less quickly appreciated by Joffre, who had ordered a continuance of the retreat, than by Galliéni, the Military Governor of Paris. On the 3rd of September Galliéni realized the meaning of Kluck's wheel inwards, and directed Maunoury's 6th Army to be ready to strike at the exposed German right flank. All the next day an argument raged at Joffre's headquarters, the case for an immediate counter-offensive being pressed by Major Gamelin, his military secretary, but stoutly opposed by General Berthelot, the most powerful voice on the general staff. The issue was only settled, and Joffre's sanction gained, when Galliéni came through on the telephone that evening. Once convinced, Joffre acted with decision. The whole left wing was ordered to turn about, and return to a general offensive beginning on the 6th of September.

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Maunoury was quick off the mark, on the 5th, and as his pressure developed on the Germans' sensitive flank, Kluck was constrained to draw off first one part, and then the remaining part of his army to support his threatened flank guard. Thereby a thirty-mile gap was created between the 1st and 2nd German armies, a gap covered only by a screen of cavalry. Kluck was emboldened to take the risk because of the rapid retreat of the British opposite to that gaping sector. Even on the 5th, instead of turning about, the British had continued a further day's march to the south. But in this 'disappearance' lay the indirect and unintentional cause of victory. For, when the British retraced their steps, it was the report that their columns were advancing into the gap which, on the 9th of September, led Bülow to order the retreat of his 2nd Army. The temporary advantage which the 1st Army, already isolated by its own act, had gained over Maunoury was thereby nullified, and it fell back the same day.

By the 11th the retreat had extended, independently or under orders from Moltke, to all the German armies. The attempt at a partial envelopment, pivoting on Verdun, had already failed—the jaw formed by the 6th and 7th Armies merely breaking its teeth on the defences of the French eastern frontier. It is difficult to see how the German command could reasonably have pinned their faith on achieving as an improvised expedient the frontal assault that, in cool calculation before the war, had appeared so hopeless as to lead them to take the momentous decision to advance through Belgium as the only feasible alternative.

Thus, in sum, the battle of the Marne was decided by a jar and a crack. The jar administered by Maunoury's attack on the German right flank causing a

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crack in a weak joint of the German line, and this physical crack in turn producing a moral crack in the German command.

Against this background it can be seen that Kluck's indirect move, his wheel outward after Le Cateau, was as valuable in upsetting Joffre's second plan—for an early return to the offensive—and in accelerating the dangerous momentum of the Franco-British retreat, as his subsequent wheel inward, directly towards the opponent, was fatal to the German plan. We may note, too, that Moltke's strategic approach became increasingly direct, and that the frontal assault of the German left wing proved not only a costly failure but brought no strategic return to compensate its cost.

It would be far-fetched to characterize Joffre's retreat as an indirect approach. The opportunity on the Marne was presented, not created, nor even sought. Galliéni's thrust was in the nick of time, before the German 1st and 2nd Armies could take up their new flank guard dispositions. But it was too direct to produce decisive results, and would have been more direct still if he had made it south of the Marne as Joffre first instructed. Finally, it can be seen that the actual decision, the move which compelled the Germans to retreat, was due to an indirect approach so unintentional as to form an act of historical comedy. This was the disappearance of the British expeditionary force, and its happily belated reappearance opposite the strained and weakened joint of the German right wing. French critics have reproached it for this slowness, not realizing that it contributed a new, if somewhat different point to the fable of the hare and the tortoise. If it had returned sooner the joint would hardly have been so weakened. Maunoury's attack could not have produced a decision—for he had already been brought to a halt while the two German

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corps taken from the joint were still on the march, and contributing nothing to the issue.

In analysing the cause of the German retreat, however, we must take account of a factor customarily overlooked. This was the sensitiveness of the Supreme Command to reports of landings on the Belgian coast which might menace their rear and communications. It led them to contemplate a withdrawal before the battle of the Marne even began. On the 3rd of September Lieut.-Colonel Hentsch, the representative of the Supreme Command, came to the 1st Army with the latest precautionary order and informed it that—'The news is bad: the 7th and 6th Armies are blocked before Nancy-Epinal. The 4th and 5th are meeting strong resistance. The French are railing forces from their right towards Paris. The English are disembarking fresh troops continuously on the Belgian coast. There are rumours of a Russian expeditionary force in the same parts. A withdrawal is becoming inevitable.'

The sensitiveness of the German command had enlarged three battalions of marines which landed at Ostend, for forty-eight hours, into a corps of 40,000 men. The Russians are said to have sprung from the heated imagination of an English railway porter—there should be a statue in Whitehall dedicated 'To the Unknown Porter'. The historians of the future may consider that this party of temporary visitors to Ostend, together with the Russian myth, were the primary cause of the victory of the Marne.

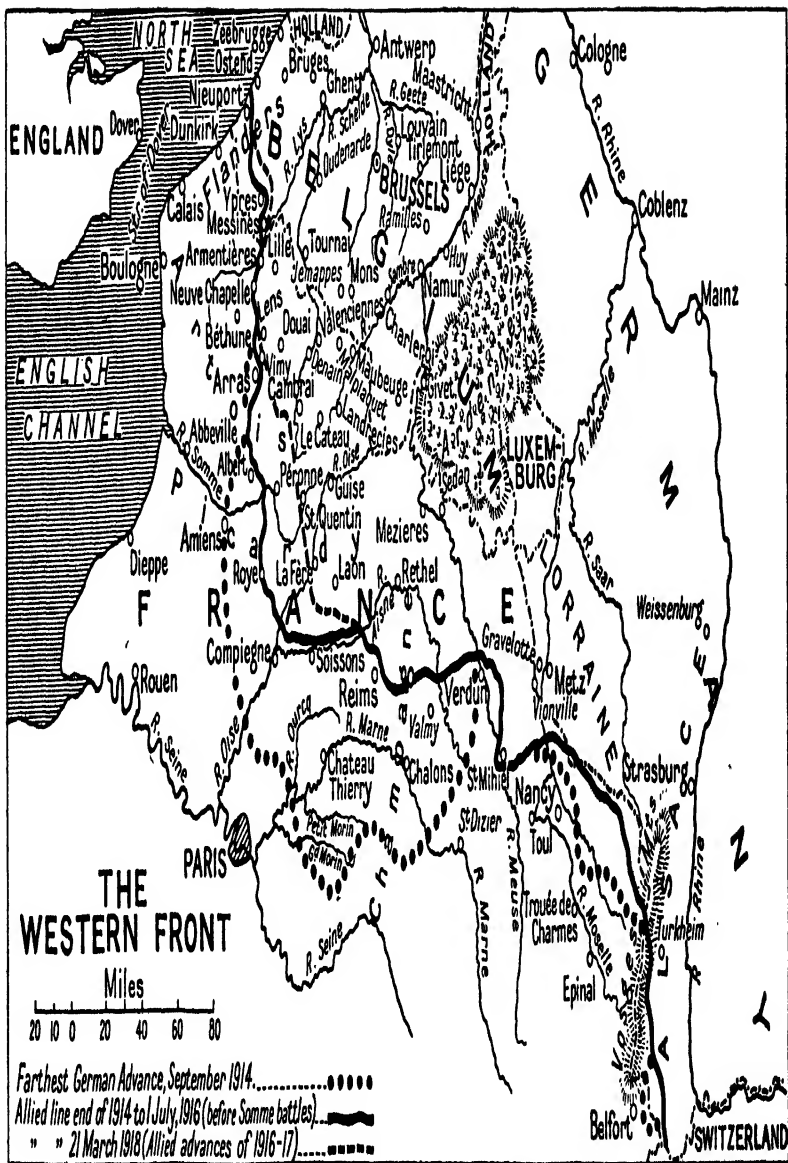
When the moral effect of these phantom forces is weighed with the material detention of German forces in Belgium, owing to fears of a Belgian sortie from Antwerp—which developed on the 9th of September—the balance of judgement would seem to turn heavily in favour of the strategy which Sir John French

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had suggested at the outset. By it the British expeditionary force might have had a positively, and not merely negatively, decisive influence on the struggle.

The latent menace of the Belgian coast to the German rear had throughout been appreciated by Falkenhayn, who now replaced Moltke. His first step was to undertake the reduction of Antwerp, and from this grew the germ of a manœuvre which savoured of the indirect approach. Its execution fell short of, and became more direct than, its conception, yet it sufficed to bring the Allies afresh to the verge of disaster.

The Allied frontal pursuit had been definitely checked on the Aisne before Joffre, on the 17th of September, seeing that Maunoury's attempts to overlap the German flank were ineffectual, decided to form a fresh army under de Castelnau for an out-flanking move. By then the German armies had recovered cohesion, and the German command was ready to meet such limited manœuvre—now the natural line of expectation. The next month was occupied by the extremely obvious and abortive series of attempts by either side to overlap the other's western flank—a phase popularly, if inaccurately, styled 'the race to the sea'. Falkenhayn tired of the game long before Joffre, and on the 14th of October planned a strategic trap for the next allied attempt which he foresaw would follow. His latest-formed flank army was to parry the attempt, while another—composed of the forces released by the fall of Antwerp and of four newly raised corps—was to sweep down the Belgian coast, crush in the flank, and crash upon the rear, of the attacking Allies. He even held back, momentarily, the troops pursuing the Belgian field army from Antwerp in order to avoid prematurely alarming the Allied command.

Fortunately for the Allies, King Albert, from cau-



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tion or realism, refused Foch's invitation to join in this outflanking effort, and declined to quit the coastal district. Thereby the Belgian army was in position to withstand, and eventually, by flooding the low coastal strip, frustrate the German sweep from the north. This compelled Falkenhayn to make a more direct approach to the Allied flank—which had just been extended to Ypres by the arrival of Haig's corps from the Aisne. Although the attempted advance of the earlier-coming British right and centre corps had already been held up, Sir John French ordered his left wing under Haig to attempt the realization of Joffre's outflanking dream. Fortunately again, the attempt coincided with the premature opening of the German attack, and thus was stillborn—although for a day or two French, under Foch's influence, persisted in believing that this British 'attack' was going on, whereas actually Haig's troops were struggling hard even to hold their ground. The delusion of the French and British chiefs as to the reality of the situation was partly responsible for the fact that Ypres, like Inkerman, was essentially a 'soldiers' battle'. Falkenhayn, too, once his hope of sweeping down the coast had faded, persisted for a month in trying to force a decision by a direct approach. When the direct defence, despite weakness of strength, triumphed as usual over the direct attack, the trench barrier became consolidated from the Swiss frontier to the sea—and stalemate ensued.

The Western Theatre, 1915–1917

The military record of the Franco-British alliance during the next four years is a story of the attempt to break this deadlock, either by forcing the barrier or by haphazardly seeking a way round.

On the Western front, with its interminable parallel

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lines of entrenchments, strategy became the handmaiden of tactics, while tactics became a robot. The strategical side of the years 1915-17 does not call for much examination. On the Allied side the strategy was purely that of direct approach, and it was ineffectual to break the deadlock. Whatever be our opinion of the merits of attrition, and of the argument that the whole period should be regarded as one continuous battle, a method which requires four years to produce a decision is not to be regarded as a model for imitation.

At Neuve Chapelle, the first attempt at the offensive in 1915, the approach was direct, but tactical surprise at least was sought and gained. Thereafter, with the adoption of prolonged 'warning' bombardments, all the attempts became barefaced frontal assaults. Of this nature were the French offensive near Arras in May 1915; the Franco-British offensives of September 1915 in Champagne and north of Arras; of July to November 1916 on the Somme; of April 1917 on the Aisne and at Arras; and lastly the British offensive at Ypres from July to October 1917—which, like King Charles II, took so long in dying in the swamps of Passchendaele. On the 20th of November 1917, at Cambrai, tactical surprise was revived by the use of massed tanks, suddenly unleashed, in place of a long preliminary bombardment; but strategically this small-scale attack, so happy in its opening, so unhappy in its end, could hardly be termed an indirect approach.

On the German side, the strategy was strictly defensive except for the Verdun interlude in 1916. That, again, was essentially a direct approach—unless the idea of bleeding one's enemy to death by an illimitable series of limited leech-bites can be termed indirect. But the expenditure in leeches caused its bankruptcy.

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More akin to the nature of the indirect approach, but purely defensive in aim, was Ludendorff's ably conceived and prepared withdrawal of part of the German forces to the Hindenburg line in the spring of 1917. To anticipate the renewal of the Franco-British offensive on the Somme, a new trench line of great artificial strength was built across the chord of the arc Lens-Noyon-Reims. Then, after devastating the whole area inside the arc, the Germans withdrew by methodical stages to the new and shorter line. This manœuvre, distinguished by its moral courage in yielding ground, dislocated the whole plan of the Allies' spring offensive. Thereby it helped to gain the Germans a year's respite from serious danger and from any combined offensive of the Allies, allowed time for Russia's disintegration to become complete, and enabled Ludendorff to make his supreme bid for victory, with superiority of force, in 1918.

Chapter XIV

THE NORTH-EASTERN THEATRE

On the eastern front the plans of campaign were more fluid, less elaborately worked out and formulated—although they were to be as kaleidoscopic in their changes of fortune as in the western theatre. The calculable condition was geographical; the main incalculable, Russia's rate of concentration.

Russian Poland was a vast tongue of country projecting from Russia proper, and flanked on three sides by German or Austrian territory. On its northern flank lay East Prussia, with the Baltic Sea beyond. On its southern flank lay the Austrian province of Galicia, with the Carpathian mountains beyond, guarding the approaches to the plain of Hungary. On the west lay Silesia.

The Germanic border provinces were provided with a network of strategic railways, whilst Poland, as well as Russia itself, had only a sparse system of communications. Thus the German alliance had a vital advantage, in power of concentration, for countering a Russian advance. But if they took the offensive, the further they progressed into Poland or Russia proper the more would they lose this advantage. Hence the experience of history suggested that their most profitable strategy was to lure the Russians forward into position for a counter-stroke, rather than to inaugurate

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an offensive themselves. The one drawback was that such a Punic strategy gave the Russians time to concentrate, and set in motion, their cumbrous and rusty machine.

From this arose an initial cleavage between German and Austrian opinion. Both agreed that the problem was to hold the Russians in check during the six weeks before the Germans, it was hoped, would have crushed France, and could switch their forces eastwards to join the Austrians in a decisive blow against the Russians. The difference of opinion was on the method. The Germans, intent on a decision against France, wished to leave a minimum force in the east. Only a political dislike of exposing national territory to invasion prevented them evacuating East Prussia, and standing on the Vistula line. But the Austrians, under the influence of Conrad von Hötzendorf, Chief of their General Staff, were anxious to throw the Russian machine out of gear by an immediate offensive. As this promised to keep the Russians fully occupied while the campaign in France was being decided, Moltke fell in with this strategy. Conrad's plan was that of an offensive north-eastwards into Poland by two armies, protected by two more on their right, further east.

On the opposing side, also, the desires of one ally vitally affected the strategy of the other. The Russian command, both for military and for racial motives, wished to concentrate first against Austria, while the latter was unsupported, and to leave Germany alone until later, when the full strength of the Russian army would be mobilized. But the French, anxious to relieve the German pressure against themselves, urged the Russians to deliver a simultaneous attack against Germany. The outcome was that the Russians consented to undertake an extra offensive for which they

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were neither ready, in numbers, nor organized. On the south-western front, two pairs of armies were to converge on the Austrian forces in Galicia ; on the north-western front, two armies were to converge on the German forces in East Prussia. Russia, whose proverbial slowness and crude organization dictated a cautious strategy, was about to break with tradition and launch out on a double direct approach.

On the outbreak of war the Russian Commander-in-Chief, the Grand Duke Nicholas, accelerated the invasion of East Prussia in order to ease the pressure on his French allies. On the 17th of August Rennenkampf's army crossed the east frontier of East Prussia, and on the 19th to 20th of August met and threw back the bulk of Prittwitz's German 8th Army at Gumbinnen. On the 21st of August, Prittwitz heard that Samsonov's Army had crossed the southern frontier of East Prussia in his rear, which was guarded by only three divisions—in face of ten. In panic, Prittwitz momentarily spoke of falling back behind the Vistula, whereupon Moltke superseded him by a retired general, Hindenburg, with Ludendorff as Chief of Staff.

Developing a plan which, with the necessary movements, had been already initiated by Colonel Hoffmann of the 8th Army staff, Ludendorff concentrated some six divisions against Samsonov's left wing. This force, inferior in strength to the Russians, could not have been decisive ; but Ludendorff, finding that Rennenkampf was still near Gumbinnen, took the calculated risk of withdrawing the rest of the German troops, except the cavalry screen, from that front and rushing them back against Samsonov's right wing. This daring move was aided by the absence of communication between the two Russian commanders and the ease with which the Germans deciphered the Russian wireless orders. Under converging blows, Samsonov's

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flanks were crushed, his centre surrounded, and his army practically destroyed. If the opportunity was presented rather than created, this brief Tannenberg campaign forms an almost perfect example of the 'interior lines' form of the indirect approach.

Then, receiving two fresh army corps from the front in France, the German commander turned on the slowly advancing Rennenkampf—whose lack of energy was partly due to his losses at Gumbinnen and subsequent lack of information—and drove him out of East Prussia. As a result of these battles, Russia had lost a quarter of a million men and, what she could afford still less, much war material. The invasion of East Prussia, however, had at least helped to make possible the French revival on the Marne—by causing the dispatch of two corps from the west.

But the effect of Tannenberg was diminished because, away on the Galician front, the scales had tilted against the Central Powers. The offensive of the Austrian 1st and 4th Armies into Poland had at first made progress, but this was nullified by the onslaught of the Russian 3rd and 8th Armies upon the weaker 2nd and 3rd Armies which were guarding the Austrian right flank. These armies were heavily defeated (the 26th to 30th of August), and driven back through Lemberg. The advance of the Russian left wing thus threatened the rear of the victorious Austrian left wing. Conrad tried to swing part of his left wing round against the Russian flank, but this blow was parried. And then, caught with his forces disorganized by the renewed advance of the Russian right wing, he was forced, on the 11th of September, to extricate himself by a general retreat—falling back almost to Cracow by the end of September.

Austria's plight compelled the Germans to send aid. The bulk of the German force in East Prussia was

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formed into a new 9th Army, and switched south to the south-west corner of Poland, whence it advanced on Warsaw in combination with a renewed Austrian offensive. But the Russians were now approaching the full tide of their mobilized strength; re-grouping their forces and counter-attacking, they drove back the advance and followed it up by a powerful effort to invade Silesia.

The Grand Duke Nicholas formed a huge phalanx of seven armies—three in the van and two protecting either flank. A further army, the 10th, had invaded the eastern corner of East Prussia and was engaging the weak German forces there. To counter the danger, the German eastern front was placed under the firm of Hindenburg-Ludendorff-Hoffmann, which devised yet another master-stroke, based on the system of lateral railways inside the German frontier. The 9th Army, falling back before the Russian advance, slowed it down by a systematic destruction of the scanty communications in Poland. On reaching the Silesian frontier, unpressed, it was first switched northward to the Posen-Thorn area, and then thrust south-east, on the 11th of November, up the west bank of the Vistula, against the joint between the two armies guarding the Russian right flank. The wedge, as if driven in by a mallet, split the two armies, forced the 1st back on Warsaw and almost achieved another Tannenberg against the 2nd—which was nearly surrounded at Lodz, when the 5th Army from the van turned back to its rescue. As a result, part of the German enveloping force almost suffered the fate planned for the Russians, but managed to cut its way through to the main body. If the Germans were balked of decisive tactical success, this manœuvre had been a classic example of how a relatively small force, by using its mobility for indirect approach to a vital

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point, can paralyse the advance of an enemy several times its strength. The Russian 'steam-roller' was thrown out of gear, and never again did it threaten German soil.

Within a week, four new German army corps arrived from the western front, where the Ypres attack had now ended in failure. Although they came too late to clinch the missed chance of a decisive victory, Ludendorff was able to use them in pressing the Russians back to the Bzura-Ravka river line in front of Warsaw. There, on the east as on the west, the trench stalemate settled in; but the crust was less firm, and the Russians had drained their stock of munitions to an extent that their poorly industrialized country could not make good.

The real story of 1915 on the eastern front is that of the tussle of wills between Ludendorff, who desired to reach a decision by a strategy that was at least geographically an indirect approach, and Falkenhayn, who considered that he could both limit his expenditure of force and cripple Russia's offensive power by a strategy of direct approach. Holding the superior appointment, Falkenhayn succeeded in gaining his way; but his strategy did not succeed in fulfilling either object.

Ludendorff perceived that the Russians' autumn advance towards Silesia and Cracow had enmeshed the body of their army deeply in the Polish salient. In the south-western corner they had even poked their head through the meshes, into Austrian territory, when Ludendorff's Lodz blow fell and temporarily paralysed the body; by the time feeling and strength came back, the jagged edges of the net had been re-knit and reinforced. From January to April the Russian body wriggled furiously but ineffectively on the Carpathian side; its struggles merely wrapped its cumbrous mass more firmly in the net.

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Ludendorff wished to seize the opportunity for a wide indirect approach round the northern flank near the Baltic, through Vilna, towards the Russian rear and astride their sparse rail communications with the Polish salient. Falkenhayn, however, shrank both from its boldness and its demand upon his reserves—although he was to expend far more in his own way. Reluctantly dissuaded from a fresh direct attempt to trench-barrier in the west, and compelled to dole out reserves to strengthen his Austrian allies, he decided to employ them in a strategically limited, if tactically unlimited, attempt to lame Russia—so that he might return to renew his offensive in the west undisturbed.

The plan in the east, suggested by Conrad and adopted by Falkenhayn, was to break through the Russian centre in the Dunajec sector between the Carpathians and the Vistula. On the 2nd of May the blow fell. The surprise was complete, the exploitation rapid, and by the 14th of May the whole line along the Carpathians had been rolled back eighty miles to the San.

Here we can see an illuminating example of the difference between the indirect approach and what is commonly called surprise. Surprise of time, place, and force was achieved; but the Russians were merely rolled back in snowball fashion. Although they lost heavily, they were rolled back towards their reserves, supplies, and railways—thereby the Germans consolidated the snowball and enabled Russian accretions to make good the pieces that fell off. Moreover, while the pressure of this direct approach was a dangerous strain on the Russian command, it was not a dislocating jar.

Falkenhayn now realized that he had committed himself too far in Galicia to draw back. His partial offensive had gained no secure halting-place, and only by bringing more troops from France could he hope

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to fulfil his aim of transferring troops back there. But once more he chose an almost direct approach. He changed the direction of the offensive from eastward to north-eastward and in conjunction ordered Ludendorff—all this time fretting impatiently in East Prussia—to strike south-eastward. Ludendorff contended that this plan, if convergent, was too much of a frontal attack, and that while the two wings might squeeze the Russians they would do no more. He again urged, and Falkenhayn again rejected, the Vilna manœuvre. The outcome proved Ludendorff correct; Falkenhayn's shears, as they closed, merely pushed the Russians back out of the now shallow space between them. By the end of September they were back on a long straight line between Riga on the Baltic and Czernowitz on the Rumanian frontier. If never again a direct menace to Germany, they imposed on her an irremediable strain, by detaining large German forces and keeping Austria morally and physically on the rack.

• When Falkenhayn broke off large-scale operations, he gave Ludendorff a belated and half-hearted sanction to try the Vilna manœuvre with his own meagre resources. This light and isolated thrust cut the Vilna-Dvinsk railway and almost reached the Minsk railway, the central line of Russian communications—despite the Russians being free to concentrate all their reserves to resist it. These results were a suggestive testimony to its potentialities if attempted earlier, and in strong force, when the Russian body was firmly entangled in the Polish net.

Their offensive in the east being terminated, and their defensive in the west being unshaken, the Central Powers utilized the autumn to carry through a campaign in Serbia. This campaign, from the viewpoint of the war as a whole, was an indirect approach with limited aim, but in its own sphere was decisive in aim.

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Its course, too, if helped by the geographical and political situation, sheds light on the effect of this method. The plan was based on Bulgaria's intervention in the war on the side of the Central Powers. The direct Austro-German invasion was being held in check when the Bulgarians moved westward into Serbia; even then, helped by the mountainous country, the Serbians' resistance remained firm until the Bulgar left wing worked round into southern Serbia across their rear, cutting them off from the Franco-British reinforcements which were being sent up from Salonika. Thereupon the Serbian collapse was swift, and only a tattered remnant survived the mid-winter retreat westwards through Albania to the Adriatic coast. This quick concentration against a junior partner relieved Austria of danger on this side while giving Germany free communication through, and control of, Central Europe.

The operations of 1916 and 1917 on the Russian front call for little comment, being essentially defensive on the Austro-German side, and essentially direct on the Russian side. The significance of the Russian operations is that they throw into clear relief not only the barrenness of a strategy which relies on the application of mere weight in a direct approach, but its 'boomerang' moral effect. When the Revolution presaged the complete collapse of Russia's military effort, in 1917, the Russian forces were actually better armed and better equipped than at any previous time. But the immense, and visibly abortive, losses had undermined the fighting will of the most patiently self-sacrificing troops in Europe. A similar effect was seen in the mutinies in the French army after the spring offensive in 1917. Most of the outbreaks there occurred when slaughter-wearied troops were ordered to return to the trenches.

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The one Russian operation which had some indirectness of approach was Brusilov's offensive near Luck, in June 1916. And it had this quality because the offensive had no serious intention. It was conceived merely as a diversion, and released prematurely owing to Italy's appearance. No preparation nor concentration of troops had been made, and the unexpectedness of this almost casual advance brought about such a collapse of the somnolent Austrian defence that within three days 200,000 prisoners were netted. Rarely has a surprise shock been so manifold in its strategic results. It stopped the Austrian attack on Italy. It compelled Falkenhayn to withdraw troops from the western front, and so to abandon his attrition campaign round Verdun. It spurred Rumania to enter the war against the Central Powers. It caused the downfall of Falkenhayn and his replacement by Hindenburg and Ludendorff (Hoffmann, to 'the firm's' loss, was left in the east). Although Rumania's entry was the pretext for Falkenhayn's supersession, the real reason was that his direct strategy in 1915, narrow both in purpose and direction, had made possible the Russian revival which completed the ruin of the 1916 strategy.

But the indirectness and the good effect of Brusilov's offensive were short-lived. It led the Russian command, too late, to throw the weight of their forces in this direction. And, in accord with the natural laws of war, the prolongation of the effort along the line of hardening resistance used up the Russian reserves without compensating effect. Brusilov's ultimate loss of 1,000,000 casualties, though terrible, could be made good; but, by revealing to the survivors the mental bankruptcy of the Russian command, it caused the moral bankruptcy of Russia's military power.

The Russians' obsessed concentration on this effort

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enabled Hindenburg and Ludendorff to carry through another quick-change indirect approach—as against Serbia in 1915. Partly from force of circumstances, it became more truly a strategic indirect approach. Rumania was the target. At the outset she had 23 divisions, indifferently equipped, against 7 opposing her; and she hoped that the pressure of Brusilov, of the British on the Somme, and of the allied force now at Salonika would prevent these being reinforced. But these pressures were all direct, and they did not prevent the withdrawal of sufficient troops to crush Rumania.

Rumania's territory, sandwiched between Transylvania and Bulgaria, had strong natural ramparts on either side of the Carpathians and the Danube—but by its situation lent itself to a strategy of indirect approach. Further, her Dobruja 'back-yard' strip near the Black Sea formed a bait which a skilful opponent could attach to his hook.

Her desire and decision to take the offensive westwards into Transylvania made her opponents' counter-action more subtly indirect than they intended.

The Rumanian advance began on the 27th of August 1916. Three main columns, each of about 4 divisions, moved north-west through the Carpathian passes in a direct approach towards the Hungarian plain. To guard the Danube, 3 divisions were left, and 3 more in the Dobruja—whither the Russians had promised to send reinforcements. But the slow and cautious advance of the Rumanian columns into Transylvania, hampered by the enemy's destruction of bridges but not by resistance, did not seriously menace the 5 weak Austrian divisions which covered the frontier until they had been reinforced by 5 German and 2 Austrian divisions. In fulfilment of the other half of the plan, adopted by Falkenhayn before

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his downfall, 4 Bulgarian divisions with a German stiffening, and an Austrian bridging train, were placed under Mackensen for the invasion of the Dobruja.

While the Rumanian columns were crawling westward into Transylvania, Mackensen stormed the Turtucaia bridgehead on the 5th of September, destroying the 3 Rumanian divisions which guarded the Danube front. Then, with his Danube flank secure, he moved eastwards, deeper into the Dobruja—if away from Bucharest—the natural line of expectation. It was a shrewd moral thrust, for the automatic strategic effect was to draw away the Rumanian reserves intended to support the Transylvania offensive—which lost such impetus as it had.

Falkenhayn, now given the executive command here, launched a counter-offensive—perhaps too eagerly and directly. For though he skilfully concentrated against the southern and centre columns in turn, using smaller if not minimum forces to hold off the other opponents—who hardly needed holding off—the result was to throw the Rumanians back, but not to cut them off from the mountains. The mischance jeopardized the whole German plan. For, with all the passes still in their hands, the Rumanians sturdily repulsed the German efforts to press through on their heels. Falkenhayn's first attempt to get through further west was foiled; but a renewed effort broke through just before the coming of the winter snows. By swinging westward he had now, however, entered Rumania by the front door, and the consequent direct approach had to cross a series of river lines. Fortunately for him, when he had been checked along the Alt, Mackensen intervened.

Mackensen had switched the bulk of his force back from the Dobruja, past Turtucaia, to Sistovo—where, on the 23rd of November, he forced the crossing of

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the Danube. It is a moot point whether this abandonment of his potential position on the Rumanian rear for a convergent advance of their main army towards Bucharest was the most profitable strategy. It enabled Falkenhayn to cross the Alt, but it enabled the Rumanians to use their 'close' central position for a dangerous counterstroke at Mackensen's flank. This was almost enveloped. Once the danger was averted, however, the combined pressure of Falkenhayn and Mackensen pressed the Rumanian army back through Bucharest, whence it withdrew to the Sereth-Black Sea line.

The Germans had gained possession of most of Rumania, with its wheat and oil, but they had not cut off or destroyed the Rumanian army, whose moral and mental strength had been consolidated in resisting the last stage of the enemy's advance. The next summer its sturdy resistance foiled the German attempt to drive it behind the Prut and thus complete the occupation of Rumania. Only in December 1917, when Bolshevik Russia signed an armistice with Germany, was Rumania, thereby isolated, forced to follow suit.

Chapter XV

THE SOUTH-EASTERN OR MEDITERRANEAN THEATRE

The Italian Theatre

In 1917, Italy was the scene and object of the German command's autumn repertory performances. Here again the configuration of the frontier gave the Germans scope for a geographical indirect approach which was denied to their opponents. And the latter showed no inclination to try the psychological indirect approach.

The Italian frontier province of Venezia formed a salient pointing to Austria, flanked on the north by the Austrian Tyrol and Trentino, on the south by the Adriatic. Bordering on the Adriatic was a stretch of relatively low ground on the Isonzo front; but the frontier then followed the Julian and Carnic Alps in a wide sweep round to the north-west, the arc continuing south-westward to Lake Garda. The great breadth of the Alpine masses on the north, and the absence of any vital objective, did not encourage Italy to take the offensive in that direction. She was thus restricted, for an offensive, to a direct advance eastwards towards Austria. It inevitably suffered the potential and perpetual menace of an Austrian descent from the Trentino on its rear. But with her choice so restricted she chose this course.

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For two and a half years she persevered with the direct approach, by which time the 'eleventh battle' of the Isonzo had been fought in vain, the Italian armies had scarcely advanced beyond their starting-point, and their casualties totalled some 1,100,000—while the Austrians had lost some 650,000. During that period, Austria had only once taken the offensive. This was in 1916, when Conrad had sought to obtain Falkenhayn's support for an attempt to overthrow Italy by a thrust southwards from the Trentino against the rear of the Italian armies then engaged on the Isonzo. But Falkenhayn, distrustful of the plan as well as of 'decisive' strokes, and intent on his Verdun attrition process, declined even to lend the minimum of 9 German divisions for which Conrad asked—to relieve Austrian divisions on the eastern front. In default of this aid, Conrad decided to make the attempt single-handed, taking some of his best divisions from the east—and thereby exposing this front to Brusilov's subsequent advance, without obtaining adequate force to achieve his Italian plan.

Nevertheless, the attack came close to success. If it could not be said to avoid the natural line of expectation, it had a measure of unexpectedness—because the Italian command did not believe that Conrad had the force or the facilities for a large-scale attack. It was a large-scale attack, but not quite large enough. The attack, when launched, gained rapid success in the first days; and although Cadorna was able, and prompt, to withdraw reserves from the Isonzo front—besides preparing the evacuation thereof of his stores and heavy artillery—it was a race, with the odds even. The Austrian attack was within reach of a breakthrough into the plain, but had lost its momentum for want of reserves when Brusilov's advance on the eastern front caused its suspension.

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When Ludendorff, seventeen months later, took up the idea of a combined blow at Italy—because of the serious condition of Austria—the prospects were less favourable. He could only spare his slender general reserve of six divisions, while his ally was suffering, morally and materially, from exhaustion. And, for lack of means, the plan was limited to a narrower and more direct approach—a thrust at the north-eastern corner of the Isonzo front, where it bent round towards the Alpine mass. The choice of the actual sector, however, was chosen on a principle new to this front—that of seeking the line of least tactical resistance. Originally, the plan was for a break-through at Caporetto, followed merely by rolling up the Isonzo front; it was subsequently expanded into a more ambitious design—without an increase of means. Ludendorff, at Caporetto, like the British that same autumn at Cambrai, provided an example of the profound strategic error of not ‘cutting your coat according to your cloth’. He went to the other extreme from Falkenhayn—who had always ordered too little cloth, underestimating the measurements of the coat, and then had to order more, to enlarge the coat—into an unsatisfactory patchwork.

On the 24th of October the attack was launched—having been skilfully prepared and concealed—and drove a wedge deep between the Italian armies. A week later, it had reached the Tagliamento. But once the Italians had extricated their severed forces—if with the loss of a large part—the continuation of the advance became a purely direct approach westwards, pressing the Italians back to the Piave river: a stout barricade behind which to shelter. Too late, Ludendorff thought of switching reserves round to the Trentino, but was foiled by the inadequacy of the rail communications. The Trentino army made an ineffective

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attempt to advance with its own slight resources ; this belated stroke had lost the effect of a rear thrust, for the whole Italian front and reserves had been pushed almost as far back.

The initial surprise having passed, the Austro-German attack was now a purely direct convergence, which pressed the Italians back towards their reserves, supplies, homeland, and Allied reinforcements. It had the natural negative result. But the measure of success attained with such slender resources casts an ironical reflection on Falkenhayn's refusal to listen to Conrad's more promising plan early in 1916.

The Balkan Theatre

Before we turn to consider Ludendorff's plan for 1918, it is necessary to survey the action taken or attempted by his opponents, during the previous three years, beyond the bounds of the French and Russian fronts.

While the French and British headquarters in France preserved an unquenchable faith in the power of a direct approach, not only to break through the trench barrier but to gain a decisive victory, strong doubt of its prospects was felt (from October 1914 onwards) in quarters either further or nearer to the trench front. Those who had this view, from the perspective which distance enables, were not all political leaders; they included Galliéni in France and Kitchenier in England. On the 7th of January 1915 Kitchenier wrote to Sir John French: 'The German lines in France may be looked upon as a fortress that cannot be carried by assault and also that cannot be completely invested, with the result that the lines may be held by an investing force while operations proceed elsewhere.'

It was argued, notably by Winston Churchill, that

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the enemy alliance should be viewed as a whole, and that modern developments had so changed conceptions of distance and powers of mobility that a blow in some other theatre of war would correspond to the classic attack on an enemy's strategic flank. (In this connection the example of Napoleon, so often quoted to support the case for persevering on the Western front, appears rather to lend its weight to the alternative design.) Further, it was agreed that such an operation would be in accordance with the traditional amphibious strategy of Britain, and would enable her to exploit the military advantage, hitherto neglected, of sea-power. In January 1915 Lord Kitchener advocated a plan for severing Turkey's main line of eastward communication by a landing in the Gulf of Alexandretta. The post-war comments of Hindenburg and Enver have shown how this would have paralysed Turkey; but it could hardly have exercised a wider influence, or been an indirect approach to the Central Alliance as a whole.

Lloyd George advocated the transfer of the bulk of the British forces to the Balkans as a way to the enemy's 'back-door'. But the French and British commands, confident of an early decision in France, argued vehemently against any alternative strategy—stressing the difficulties of transport and supply, and the ease with which Germany, in their opinion, could switch troops to meet the threat. If there was substance in the argument, their fervour led them to exaggerate their case. Their objections, too, were less relevant when applied to Galliéni's Balkan scheme. He proposed a landing at Salonika as a starting-point for a march on Constantinople with an army strong enough to encourage Greece and Bulgaria to join forces. The capture of Constantinople was to be followed by an advance up the Danube into Austria:

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Hungary, in conjunction with the Rumanians. This had a fundamental resemblance to the course actually taken in the last months of the war. In September 1918 German military opinion tended to regard such a contingency as 'decisive'. And in the first week of November the threat, though not yet close, was an important factor in hastening Germany's capitulation.

In January 1915, however, the weight of military opinion bore down all counter-proposals to the plan of concentration of effort on the Western Front. But misgivings were not silenced, and at this juncture a situation arose which revived the Near-Eastern scheme in a new, if attenuated form.

On the 2nd of January, 1915, Kitchener received an appeal from the Grand Duke Nicholas for a diversion which would relieve the Turkish pressure on Russia's forces in the Caucasus. Kitchener felt unable to provide the troops and suggested a naval demonstration against the Dardanelles. Churchill's imagination seized upon the wider strategic possibilities, and he proposed, in default of military aid, to convert the demonstration into an attempt to force the passage. His naval advisers, if not enthusiastic, did not oppose the project; and the admiral on the spot, Carden, drew up a plan. A naval force, mainly of obsolete vessels, was got together with French aid, and after preliminary bombardment, entered the straits on the 18th of March. But a newly-laid row of mines, in an unsuspected spot, caused the sinking of several ships; and the attempt was abandoned.

It is a moot point whether a prompt renewal of the advance would have succeeded, for the Turkish ammunition was exhausted, and in such conditions the mine obstacle might have been overcome. But the new naval commander, Admiral de Robeck, decided against it, unless military aid were forthcoming. Al-

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ready, a month before, the War Council had determined on a joint attack, and begun the dispatch of a military force under Sir Ian Hamilton. But the authorities, slow in accepting the new scheme, were equally slow in releasing the necessary troops for its execution; and even when these were sent, in inadequate numbers, several more weeks' delay had to be incurred—at Alexandria—in order to redistribute the force in its transports suitably for tactical action. Worst of all, this fumbling policy had thrown away the chance of surprise. When the preliminary bombardment took place in February, only 2 Turkish divisions were at the Straits; this was increased to 4 by the date of the naval attack; and to 6 when Hamilton was at last able to attempt his landing. For this he had only 4 British divisions and 1 French division—actually inferior in strength to the enemy in a situation where the inherent preponderance of defensive over offensive power was multiplied by the natural difficulties of the terrain. His weakness of numbers, and his restricted mission of aiding the passage of the fleet, compelled him to choose a landing on the Gallipoli peninsula in preference to one on the mainland or on the Asiatic shore.

On the 25th of April he made his spring, at the southern tip of the peninsula near Cape Helles and also near Gaba Tepe, some fifteen miles up the Aegean coast; the French, as a diversion, made a temporary landing at Kum Kale on the Asiatic shore. But once the momentary asset of tactical surprise had passed, and the Turks were able to bring up their reserves, the invaders could not expand their two precarious footholds.

Ultimately, in July, the British Government decided to send a further 5 divisions to reinforce the 7 now on the peninsula. By the time they arrived the Turkish

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strength in the region had also risen, to 15 divisions. Hamilton decided on a double stroke—a reinforced blow from Gaba Tepe and a new landing at Suvla Bay, a few miles north—to sever the middle of the peninsula and secure the heights commanding the Narrows. If this thrust appears more direct than a landing at Bulair or on the Asiatic shore, its justification is that it was on a line not expected by the enemy command, whose reserves were concentrated at the other points. Only $1\frac{1}{2}$ Turkish battalions barred the way during the thirty-six hours before reserves arrived. Time and opportunity were forfeited by the inexperience of the landing troops and the inertia of the commanders on the spot. The deadlock, the disappointment, and the opposition of those who had always disliked the project, soon brought about the evacuation of the peninsula.

Yet the verdict of Falkenhayn on the Dardanelles scheme was: 'If the straits between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea were not permanently closed to Entente traffic, all hope of a successful course of the war would be very considerably diminished. Russia would have been freed from her significant isolation . . . which offered a safer guarantee than military successes that sooner or later a crippling of the forces of this Titan must take place automatically.' The fault was not in the conception but in the execution. If the British had used at the outset even a fair proportion of the forces they ultimately expended in dribbets, it is clear from the evidence of the opposing commanders that success would probably have crowned their undertaking. While the Dardanelles move was a direct approach to Turkey, it was an indirect approach to the main Turkish armies then engaged in the Caucasus, and, on the higher level, an indirect approach to the Central Powers as a whole. Viewed against the

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gloomy background of the Western Front, where the density of force in relation to space offered no prospect of a decisive penetration, the Dardanelles conception appears to have fulfilled the principle of adjusting the end to the means as thoroughly as its execution violated this principle.

The Palestine and Mesopotamia Theatres

The Middle-East expeditions hardly come within the scope of this survey. Strategically they were too remote to have any hope of exercising a decisive effect; and, considered as means of strategic distraction, each of them absorbed far greater forces of the British than they diverted of the enemy.

In the sphere of policy, however, a case can be made out for them. Britain, in the past, has often redeemed the forfeits of her allies on the continent by seizing the overseas possessions of the enemy. In the event of an unfavourable or indecisive issue to the main struggle such counter-gains are an asset in negotiating a favourable peace settlement. And they are a tonic during the struggle.¹

The local strategy of the Palestine expedition deserves study. At the outset it combined the disadvantages of both the direct and indirect approach. It took the line of natural expectation, which was also the longest and most difficult way round to any vital point of the Turkish power. After the first two failures (in March and April 1917) at Gaza, which guarded the

¹ Those who opposed any idea of returning some of Germany's confiscated colonies, from concern that they might become a source of danger, failed to take account of the indirect value to us, in case of war, of having places where we might score an early success—to offset the depressing effect of enemy successes in the European theatre and help to balance the loss of prestige these might cause. The psychological importance of such counterpoises should never be overlooked, especially by a sea power.

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direct coast approach from Egypt to Palestine, the larger force available in the autumn was used for a less direct attempt. The plan—designed by Chetwode and adopted by Allenby on relieving Murray in command—was as geographically indirect as the water-supply and the narrow width of the tract between the sea and the desert allowed. The Turkish defences stretched some twenty miles inland from Gaza, while Beersheba, ten miles further inland, formed an outlying post guarding the eastern margin of the area of possible approach. Secrecy and ruses drew the Turkish attention Gaza-wards; then Beersheba with its water-supply was seized by a wide and swift swoop on its unprotected side. Next in the plan, preceded by a distracting attack on Gaza, was a blow at the flank of the Turkish main position while the cavalry from Beersheba swept round the Turks' rear. But difficulties in the water-supply and a Turkish counterstroke north of Beersheba hamstrung this manœuvre; although the Turkish front was pierced, decisive results were missed. The Turkish forces were rolled back, ultimately beyond Jerusalem, but they were not rolled up and cut off as intended.

A decision, and the attempt to reach it, were postponed a year—until September 1918. Meantime, in the desert to the east and south, a curious campaign was not only helping to weaken the fighting strength of Turkey but shedding some new light on strategy—and, in particular, on the indirect approach. This campaign was the Arab Revolt, with Lawrence as its guiding brain. If it falls into the category of guerrilla warfare, which is by its very nature indirect, its strategy had such a scientifically calculated basis that we should not miss its reflection on normal warfare. Admittedly an extreme form of the indirect approach, it was most economically effective within the limits of

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the instrument. The Arabs were both more mobile and less able to bear casualties than orthodox armies. The Turks were almost insusceptible to loss of men, but not to loss of material—of which they suffered a scarcity. Superb in sitting tight in a trench, firing at a directly oncoming target, they were neither adaptable to, nor able to endure the strain of, fluid operations. They were trying to hold down a vast area of country with a quantity of men which was not large enough to spread itself in a network of posts over the area. Also, they depended on a long and frail line of communications.

From these premisses was evolved a strategy which was the antithesis of orthodox doctrine. Whereas normal armies seek to preserve contact, the Arabs sought to avoid it. Whereas normal armies seek to destroy the opposing forces, the Arabs sought purely to destroy material—and to seek it at points where there was no force. But Lawrence's strategy went further. Instead of trying to drive the enemy away by cutting off their supplies, he aimed to keep them there, by allowing short rations to reach them, so that the longer they stayed the weaker and more depressed they became. Blows might induce them to concentrate, and simplify both their supply and security problems. Pinpricks kept them spread out. Yet for all its unconventionality this strategy merely carried to its logical conclusion that of following the line of least resistance. As its author has said: 'The Arab army never tried to maintain or improve an advantage, but to move off and strike again somewhere else. It used the smallest force in the quickest time at the farthest place. To continue the action till the enemy had changed his dispositions to resist it, would have been to break the fundamental rule of denying him targets.'

What was this but the strategy evolved in 1918 on

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the Western Front? Fundamentally the same, but carried to a further degree. Its application to the problem of normal warfare is conditioned by the factors of time, space, and force. While it is a quickened and active form of blockade it is inherently slower to take effect than a strategy of dislocation. Hence, if national conditions make a quick issue imperative the latter appears preferable. But unless the end is sought by an indirect approach, the 'short-cut' is likely to prove slower, more costly, and more dangerous than the 'Lawrence' strategy. Lack of room and density of force are also handicaps, if rarely insuperable. A reasoned verdict is that in normal warfare the choice should fall on the form of indirect approach which aims at a quick decision, by 'trapping' the opponent—if there is a good prospect of its success. Otherwise, or after it has failed, the choice should fall on that form of indirect approach which aims at an eventual decision by sapping the opponent's strength and will. Anything is preferable to the direct approach.

The opportunity of carrying the strategy of the Arab revolt to completion was not vouchsafed, for in September 1918—when it had reduced the Turkish forces on the Hejaz railway to a state of paralytic helplessness—the main Turkish forces in Palestine were overthrown by a single decisive stroke. In this stroke of Allenby's, however, the Arab forces played a significant part.

Whether these final operations in Palestine should be classified as a campaign or as a battle completed by a pursuit is difficult to determine. For they opened with the forces in contact and the victory was complete before that contact was broken, so that they would seem to fall into the battle category. But victory was achieved mainly by strategic means, and the share of fighting was insignificant.

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This has led to a depreciation of the result, especially among those whose scale of values is governed by the dogma of Clausewitz that blood is the price of victory. Though Allenby had a superiority of more than two to one in numbers, perhaps three to one, the balance was not so heavily in his favour as in the original British advance into Palestine, which had ended in failure. And many other offensives had failed, both in the World War and earlier, with similar superiority of force.

A more serious 'depreciation' is on the score of the decaying morale of the Turks. But when full deduction is made for the advantageous conditions of September 1918, the operations deserve to rank among history's masterpieces for their breadth of vision and treatment. While the subject was not a difficult one, the picture is almost unique as a perfect conception perfectly executed—in its broad lines at least.

The plan abundantly fulfilled Willisen's definition of strategy as 'the study of communication', and also Napoleon's maxim that 'the whole secret of the art of war lies in making oneself master of the communications'. For it aimed to make the British master of all, and all forms of, the Turkish communications. To cut an army's lines of communication is to paralyse its physical organization. To close its line of retreat is to paralyse its moral organization. And to destroy its lines of intercommunication—by which orders and reports pass—is to paralyse its sensory organization, the essential connection between brain and body. The third effect was here sought and secured by the air force. This drove the enemy aircraft out of the air, making the enemy's command blind; and then, by bombing the main telegraph and telephone exchange at Afule, made it also deaf and dumb. The second phase of this action aptly followed the cutting of the main railway

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at Deraa by the Arabs, which had the physical effect of shutting off the flow of Turkish supplies temporarily—and temporarily was all that mattered here—and the mental effect of inducing the Turkish command to send part of its scanty reserves thither, just before it was deprived of its power of control.

The three so-called Turkish 'armies' depended on a single artery of railway communication from Damascus which branched at Deraa—one line continuing south to the Hejaz; the other turning west across the Jordan to Afule, where it sent out one shoot towards the sea at Haifa and the other southwards again to the railheads of the 7th and 8th Turkish armies. The 4th Army, east of the Jordan, depended on the Hejaz branch. To get a grip on Afule and the Jordan crossing near Beisan would sever the communications of the 7th and 8th armies, and also close their lines of retreat except for the difficult outlet to the desolate region east of the Jordan. To get a grip on Deraa would sever the communications of all three armies, and the best line of retreat of the 4th.

Deraa was too far to be reached from the British front in a time short enough to exert a prompt influence on the issue. Fortunately, the Arabs were available to emerge like phantoms from the desert and cut all three of its railway 'spokes'. But neither the nature of the Arab tactics nor the nature of the country lent itself to the formation of a strategic barrage across the Turkish rear. As Allenby sought a quick and complete decision he had to seek a closer site for such a barrage—one where the Jordan and the ranges west of it could be utilized to bar the enemy's exit. The railway junction of Afule and the Jordan bridge near Beisan lay within a sixty-mile radius of his front, and hence within the range of a strategic 'bound' by armoured cars and cavalry, provided that these vital

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points could be reached without check. The problem was to find a line of approach difficult for the Turks to obstruct in time, and to ensure that they did not block it.

How was the problem solved? The flat coastal plain of Sharon afforded a corridor to the Plain of Esdraelon and Valley of Jezreel, where Afule and Beisan lay. This corridor was interrupted by only a single door—so far back that it was unguarded—formed by the narrow mountain belt which separates the coastal Plain of Sharon from the inland Plain of Esdraelon. But the entrance to the corridor was bolted and barred by the trenches of the Turkish front.

By a long-continued 'psychological preparation', in which ruses were substitutes for shells, Allenby diverted the enemy's attention away from the coast to the Jordan flank. The success of the distraction was helped by the very failure of two attempted advances east of the Jordan during the spring. In September, while the Turks' attention was still being drawn east, Allenby's troops were moving secretly west—until in the sector near the coast their two-to-one superiority had developed into five to one. On the 19th of September, after a quarter of an hour's intense bombardment, the infantry advanced, swept over the two shallow Turkish trench systems, and then wheeled inland—like a huge door swinging on its hinges. The cavalry pressed through the opened door and, riding up the corridor with their armoured cars ahead, gained the passes into the Plain of Esdraelon. This successful passage owed much to the fact that the Air Force had rendered the enemy command deaf, dumb, and blind. Next day the strategic barrage was established across the Turks' rear. Their one remaining bolt-hole was eastwards over the Jordan. They might have reached this but for the Air Force—since the direct infantry

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advance was making slow progress in face of stubborn Turkish rearguards. Early in the morning of the 21st of September, the British aircraft spotted a large column—practically all that survived of the two Turkish armies—winding down the steep gorge from Nablus to the Jordan. Four hours' air attack turned the column into a rabble. From this moment may be timed the extinction of the 7th and 8th 'armies'. The rest was but a rounding-up of cattle.

East of the Jordan, where no strategic barrage was feasible, the fate of the 4th 'army' became a rapid attrition under constant pin-pricks rather than a near dispatch. The capture of Damascus followed. The victory was then exploited by an advance to Aleppo—200 miles beyond Damascus, and 350 miles from the front from which the British had started thirty-eight days before. During this advance they had taken 75,000 prisoners at a cost of less than 5,000 casualties.

Aleppo had just been reached when Turkey, menaced more imminently by Bulgaria's collapse and Milne's approach from Salonika on Constantinople and her rear, surrendered on the 31st of October.

In analysing the decisive victory in Palestine it is to be noted that the Turks were still capable of holding up the British infantry until the strategic barrage across their rear became known and produced its inevitable, and invariable, moral effect. Further, that because a preliminary condition of trench warfare existed the infantry were necessary to break the lock. But once the normal condition of warfare was thus restored the victory was achieved by the mobile elements, which formed but a fraction of the total force. The subtlety of this particular example of indirect approach was limited to the preparation; its execution depended purely on the dislocating and demoralizing

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application of mobility which, by its extreme degree, was a sustained surprise.

One other south-eastern theatre requires incidental note—Salonika. The dispatch of allied troops thither arose out of a belated and ineffectual attempt to send succour to the Serbs in the autumn of 1915. Three years later it was the spring-board of an offensive which had vital consequences. But while the retention of a foothold in the Balkans was necessary during the interval for reasons of policy, and of potential strategy, the wisdom and necessity of locking up so many troops, ultimately half a million, in what the Germans ironically called their 'largest internment camp', are open to doubt.

Chapter XVI

THE STRATEGY OF 1918

Any study of the military course of the final year is dependent upon, and inseparable from, an understanding of the naval situation preceding it. For, in default of an early military decision, the naval blockade had tended more and more to govern the military situation.

Indeed, if the historian of the future has to select one day as decisive for the outcome of the World War he will probably choose the 2nd of August 1914—before the war, for England, had yet begun—when Winston Churchill, at 1.25 a.m., sent the order to mobilize the British Navy. That Navy was to win no Trafalgar, but it was to do more than any other factor towards winning the war for the Allies. For the Navy was the instrument of the blockade, and as the fog of war dispersed in the clearer light of the post-war years that blockade was seen to assume larger and larger proportions: to be, more and more clearly, the decisive agency in the struggle. Like those ‘jackets’ which used to be applied in American jails to refractory prisoners, as the blockade was progressively tightened so did it first cramp the prisoner’s movement and then stifle his breathing, while the tighter it became and the longer it continued the less became the prisoner’s power of resistance, and the more demoralizing the sense of constriction.

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Helplessness induces hopelessness, and history attests that loss of hope, not loss of lives, is what decides the issue of war. No historian would underrate the direct effect of the semi-starvation of the German people in causing the final collapse of the 'home-front'. But leaving aside the question of how far the revolution caused the military defeat, instead of *vice versa*, the intangible all-pervading factor of the blockade intrudes into every consideration of the military situation.

For it was the fact and the potential menace, if not perhaps the effect, of the blockade which impelled Germany to undertake her first submarine campaign in February 1915. This gave Britain a lever to loosen the Declaration of London and tighten the blockade—by claiming the right to intercept and search all ships suspected of carrying goods to Germany. Moreover, the German action in torpedoing the *Lusitania* gave the United States a vital if delayed propulsion towards entering the war, besides serving to counteract the friction between Britain and the United States caused by the tightened blockade.

Two years later, the economic strain caused by the blockade led the German military leaders to sanction an intensive renewal of the 'unlimited' submarine campaign. Britain's dependence on sea-borne supplies for the sustenance of her people and the maintenance of her armies was a weak point in her armour, and the inherently quicker effect of the submarine form of blockade lent force to the argument that this grand-strategical form of indirect approach would inflict a mortal blow. If the calculation proved faulty, the case of Britain came critically close to establishing its correctness. The loss of shipping rose from 500,000 tons in February to 875,000 in April; by the time counter-measures combined with Germany's insuffi-

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cient submarine resources to cause a progressive decline Britain had only food enough to sustain her people for another six weeks.

The German leaders' hopes of an economic decision had reacted on their fears of an economic collapse and led them to initiate the submarine campaign, fully realizing, and accepting as almost certain, the risk that it would bring the United States into the war against them. This risk became fact on the 6th of April, 1917. But although, as Germany calculated, America's military strength required a long time to develop, her entry into the war had a prompt effect in tightening the grip of the naval blockade. As a party to the war, the United States wielded this economic weapon with a determination, regardless of the remaining neutrals, far exceeding Britain's boldest claims in the past years of controversy over neutral rights. No longer was the blockade hindered by neutral objections; instead, America's co-operation converted it into a stranglehold under which Germany gradually became limp, since military power is based on economic endurance—a truth too often overlooked.

The blockade may be classified as a grand strategy of indirect approach to which no effective resistance was possible and of a type which incurred no risk except in its slowness of effect. The effect, true to the law of momentum, tended to gather speed as it continued, and at the end of 1917 the Central Powers were feeling it severely. It was this economic pressure which not only lured but constrained Germany into the military offensive of 1918, which, once it failed, became *felo de se*. In default of a timely peace move on her part she had no choice between this offensive gamble and slow enfeeblement ending in eventual collapse.

If, after the Marne, in 1914, or even later, she had adopted a war policy of defence in the west, offence

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in the east, the issue of the war might well have been different. For, on the one hand, she could unquestionably have consummated the dream of *Mittel-Europa*, while, on the other, the blockade was still a loose grip, and could hardly have been tightened effectively so long as the United States remained outside the conflict. With the whole belt of central Europe under her control, with Russia out of the war, even in economic vassalage, there is flimsy ground for any belief that the efforts of Britain, France, and Italy could have done more than, if as much as, to induce Germany to relinquish the bargaining counters of Belgium and northern France in return for the undisputed retention of her gains in the east. A greater Germany, greater too in potential strength and resources, could well have afforded to forgo the desire for a military victory over the western allies. Indeed, to forgo aims which are not 'worth the candle' is the difference between grand strategy and grandiose stupidity.

But in 1918 the chance had passed. Her economic endurance had been severely reduced, and the tightening blockade was reducing it faster than any late-hour infusion of the economic resources of conquered Rumania and the Ukraine could restore it.

These were the conditions under which the final German offensive, the bid for a saving military decision, was made. The release of troops from the Russian front gave her superiority of force, if considerably less than the allies had enjoyed during their offensive campaigns. In March 1917, a total of 178 French, British, and Belgian divisions were marshalled against 129 German divisions. In March 1918, a total of 192 German divisions were available against 173 Allied divisions—counting proportionately the double-sized American divisions, of which 4½ had arrived. While the Germans were able to bring a few more divisions from the east,

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the American inflow developed from a trickle to a torrent under pressure of the emergency. Of the German total, 85, known as 'storm divisions', were in reserve, and of the Allied total 62—but under no centralized control; for the scheme of a general reserve of 30 divisions under the Versailles military executive committee had broken down when Haig declared that he was unable to contribute his quota of 7. When the test came, the agreement for mutual support made between the French and British commanders also broke down. Disaster hastened an overdue step, and on Haig's initiative Foch was appointed, first to co-ordinate, and then to command, the Allied armies.

The German plan was distinguished by a research for tactical surprise more thorough and far-reaching than in any of the earlier operations of the war. It is to the credit of the German command and staff that they realized how rarely the possession of superior force offsets the disadvantage of attacking in the obvious way. Also, that effective surprise can only be attained by a subtle compound of many deceptive elements. And that only by such a compound key could a gate be opened in the long-locked front. A brief but intense bombardment with gas-shell was to be the main element—Ludendorff had failed to grasp the significance of the tank and to develop it in time. But, in addition, the infantry were trained in new infiltration tactics—of which the guiding idea was that the leading troops should probe and penetrate the weak points of the defence, while the reserves were directed to back up success, not to redeem failure. The assaulting divisions were brought up by night marches; the masses of artillery were brought close to the front line in concealment, and opened fire without preliminary 'registration'. Further, the preparations made for successive attacks at other points helped to

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mystify the defender, while being in readiness for the future.

This was not all. From the experience of the vain allied offensives Ludendorff had drawn the deduction that 'tactics have to be considered before purely strategical objects which it is futile to pursue unless tactical success is possible'. In default of a strategical indirect approach, this was undoubtedly true. Hence in the German design the new tactics were to be accompanied by a new strategy. One was the corollary of the other, both based on a new or resurrected principle—that of following the line of least resistance. The conditions of 1918 in France limited the scope for taking, and Ludendorff did not attempt to take, the line of least expectation. But with the opposing armies spread out in contact along the far-flung line of entrenchments, a quick break-through followed by a rapid exploitation along the line of least resistance might come within reach of a goal which normally has been only attainable by taking the line of least expectation.

The break-through proved quick, the exploitation rapid. Yet the plan failed. Where did the fault lie? The general criticism subsequent to the event, and to the war, was that the tactical bias had led Ludendorff to change direction and dissipate his strength—to concentrate on tactical success at the expense of the strategical goal. It seemed, and was said, that the principle was false. But a closer examination of the German documents since available, and of Ludendorff's own orders and instructions, throws a different light on the question. It would seem that the real fault lay in Ludendorff's failure to carry out in practice the new principle he had adopted in theory: that he either did not grasp or shrank from the full implications of this new strategic theory. For, in fact, he dissipated too large a part of his reserves in trying to redeem tactical

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failure, and hesitated too long over decisions to exploit his tactical successes.

The trouble began even in his choice of the point of attack. It was to be made by the 17th, 2nd, and 18th Armies on a sixty-mile front between Arras and La Fère. Two alternative proposals had been considered. One, for an attack on the flanks of the Verdun salient, had been rejected on the score that the ground was unfavourable; that a break-through could hardly lead to a decisive result; and that the French army had recuperated too well after nearly a year's undisturbed convalescence. The other, for an attack between Ypres and Lens—although favoured by Ludendorff's strategic adviser, Wetzell, and espoused by Prince Rupprecht, commanding the front between St. Quentin and the sea—was rejected on the score that it would meet the main mass of the British Army and that the low-lying ground would be late in drying.

The choice fell on the Arras-La Fère sector for the reason that, apart from the ground being favourable, this sector was the weakest in defences, defenders, and reserves. Moreover, it was close to the joint between the French and British armies—Ludendorff hoped to separate the two, and then pulverize the British army, which he estimated to be weakened seriously by its prolonged efforts at Ypres. But although the comparative weakness of this sector was true as a generalization, in detail his judgement was badly at fault. The northerly third of it was strong and strongly held, by the British 3rd Army, with 14 divisions (of which 4 were in reserve), while the bulk of the British reserves were on this flank—which also could, and did, receive support more quickly from the other British armies, further north. The remaining two-thirds of the front upon which the German blow fell was held by the British 5th Army. The central

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sector facing the German 2nd Army was held by 5 divisions. The southern, and longer, part facing the German 18th Army, was held by 7 divisions (of which one was in reserve).

Ludendorff gave his 17th Army, near Arras, 19 divisions for the initial attack, by its left wing only, on a fourteen-mile front. As the British salient towards Cambrai was not to be attacked directly, but pinched out, this five-mile stretch was adequately occupied by 2 German divisions of the German 2nd Army. This army concentrated 18 divisions against the left wing of the British 5th Army (5 divisions), on a fourteen-mile front. On the extreme south, either side of Saint Quentin, came the 18th Army. Ludendorff gave it only 24 divisions to attack on a twenty-seven mile frontage. Despite his new principle, he was distributing his strength according to the enemy's strength, and not concentrating against the weakest resistance.

The direction given in his orders emphasized this tendency still more. The main effort was to be exerted north of the Somme. After breaking through, the 17th and 2nd Armies were to wheel north-west, pressing the British back towards the coast, while the river and the 18th Army guarded their flank. The 18th Army was merely an offensive flank-guard. As it turned out, this plan was radically changed, and had the appearance of following the line of least resistance, because Ludendorff gained rapid success where he desired it little, and failed to gain success where he wanted it most.

The attack was launched on the 21st of March, and the surprise was helped by an early morning mist. While the thrust broke through completely south of the Somme, where the defence—but also the attacking force—was thinnest, it was held up near Arras, a

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check which reacted on all the attack north of the river. Such a result was a calculable certainty. But Ludendorff, still violating his new principle, spent the following days in trying to revive his attack against the strong and firmly held bastion of Arras—maintaining this direction as his principal line of effort. Meantime he kept a tight rein on the 18th Army, which was advancing in the south without serious check from its opponents. As late as the 26th of March he issued orders which restrained it from crossing the Avre, and tied it to the pace of its neighbour, the 2nd—which, in turn, was held back by the very limited success of the 17th Army, near Arras. Thus we see that in reality Ludendorff was bent on breaking the British army by breaking down its strongest sector of resistance in a direct assault. And because of this obsession he failed, until too late, to throw the weight of his reserves along the line of least resistance south of the Somme.

The intended wheel to the north-west might have been fulfilled if it had been made after passing the flank, and thus been directed against the rear, of the Arras bastion. On the 26th of March the attack north of the Somme (by the left wing of the 17th Army and the right of the 2nd Army) was visibly weakening—the price of its hard-earned gains. South of the Somme the left of the 2nd Army reached, and was now to be embarrassed by, the desert of the old Somme battlefields—a brake on movement and supply. The 18th Army alone was advancing with unslackened impetus.

This situation led Ludendorff to adopt a new plan, but without relinquishing his old. He ordered for the 28th of March a fresh and direct attack on the high ground near Arras—by the right of the 17th Army, and to be followed by a 6th Army attack just to the north, between Vimy and La Bassée. But the promis-

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ing situation south of the Somme led him to indicate Amiens as the principal goal for the 2nd Army. Even so, he restrained the 18th Army from pushing on, to turn the flank of the Amiens resistance, without fresh orders. Amiens, having been recognized as an additional main objective, was to be gained by a direct approach across bad ground.

On the 28th of March the Arras attack was launched, unshielded by mist or surprise, and failed completely in face of the well-prepared resistance of Byng's 3rd Army. Only then did Ludendorff abandon his original idea, and direct his main effort, and some of his remaining reserves, towards Amiens. Meantime he ordered the 18th Army to mark time for two days. When the attack was renewed on the 30th of March it had little force, and made little progress in face of a resistance that had been allowed time to harden—helped by the cement of French reserves which were now being poured into the sagging wall. That day was the first on which the French artillery, arriving later than the infantry, had come into action in force. A further German effort was made by 15 divisions, of which only 4 were fresh, on the 4th of April, and had still less success.

Rather than be drawn into an attrition struggle, Ludendorff then suspended the attack towards Amiens. At no time had he thrown his weight along the line of fracture between the British and French armies. Yet on the 24th of March, Pétain had intimated to Haig that if the German progress continued along this line he would have to draw back the French reserves south-westwards to cover Paris. How little more German pressure would have been needed to turn the crack into a yawning chasm! The knowledge brings confirmation of two historical lessons—that a joint is the most sensitive and profitable point of attack, and

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that a penetration between two forces or units is more dangerous if they are assembled shoulder to shoulder than if they are widely separated and organically separate.

With a large part of his reserves holding the vast bulge south of Arras, Ludendorff turned, if without much confidence, to release a fresh attack further north. On the 25th of March he ordered a small-scale attack to be prepared between La Bassée and Armentières as a step towards expanding the width of his break-through. After the failure of his Arras attack on the 28th of March, he had extended the scheme. The attack south of Armentières was to be followed twenty-four hours later by an attack north of it, pinching out the town.

Arranged late, the attack was not ready for launching until the 9th of April, and, even so, was conceived merely as a diversion. But its astonishing early success—helped again by an early morning fog—against a weakened sector, led Ludendorff to convert it bit by bit into a major effort. Along an eleven-mile front south of Armentières, 9 German divisions, with 5 more in the second wave, fell on 1 Portuguese and 2 British divisions (behind which were 2 more in close reserve). Next day 4 divisions, with 2 more in the second line, attacked north of Armentières on a seven-mile front—again helped by a thick mist. As the resistance began to harden, fresh divisions were thrown in by driblets, until by the end of the first week in May more than 40 had been used. Ludendorff had thus drifted into an attrition campaign.

The British were desperately close to their bases and the sea, but their resistance had stopped the German tide, after a ten-mile invasion, just short of the important railway junction of Hazebrouck. Then, on the 17th of April, Ludendorff attempted a convergent

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blow on either side of Ypres—but it was anticipated, and almost nullified, by Haig's indirect action in swinging back his line here during the previous forty-eight hours. This project having been deflated, Ludendorff returned to a purely direct attack south of Ypres, where French reserves had arrived to take over part of the line. The attack on the 25th of April, falling on the joint, cracked it at Kemmel Hill; but Ludendorff stopped the exploitation for fear of a counterstroke. Throughout he had doled out reserves sparingly, too late and too few for real success. After the failure of his first offensive he seems to have had little faith in the second, and after a final effort on the 29th of April he stopped it. But he intended only a temporary suspension until he could draw off the French reserves to their own front—planning then to strike a final and decisive blow at the British in Flanders.

Already, he had ordered preparations for an attack on the Chemin-des-Dames sector between Soissons and Reims. This was intended for the 17th of April, but was not ready until the 27th of May—largely owing to Ludendorff's prolongation of the Flanders offensive, with its consequent drain on his reserves. The intelligence section of the American G.H.Q. had predicted the site and approximate date of the attack, but their warnings were only heeded at a late hour when confirmed by a prisoner's report on the 26th of May. It was then too late to strengthen the defence, beyond putting the troops on the alert, but the warning enabled reserves to get on the move. Next morning the blow was delivered by 15 divisions, with 7 more close behind—along a twenty-four-mile front held by 5 divisions, French and British (with 4 in reserve behind them). Covered at the start by a cloak of mist and smoke, the attack swept the defenders off the Chemin-des-Dames, and then over the Aisne. It

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reached the Marne by the 30th of May. But once again Ludendorff had obtained a measure of success for which he was neither prepared nor desirous. The sur-priser was himself surprised. The opening success not only attracted thither too large a proportion of his own reserves, but forfeited their effect—because they had no start over the Allied reserves in the race.

The extent of the opening success offers scope for analysis. It would seem to have been due in part to the distraction of the Allies' attention and reserves elsewhere, in part to pursuing more assiduously the line of least resistance, and in part to the folly of the local French army commander. He insisted on the infantry being massed in the forward positions, there to be compressed cannon-fodder for the German guns. The artillery, local reserves and command posts of the defence were similarly close to the front—and in consequence the quicker and greater was the collapse that followed the German break-through. Thereby the attack regained the tactical surprise effect which it had partly lost the day before it was launched. For, as the object of all surprise is dislocation, the effect is similar whether the opponent be caught napping by deception or allows himself to be trapped with his eyes open.

Ludendorff had now created two huge bulges, and another smaller one, in the Allied front. His next attempt was to pinch out the Compiègne buttress which lay between the Somme and Marne bulges. But this time there was no surprise, and the blow on the west side of the buttress, on the 9th of June, was too late to coincide with the pressure on the east.

A month's pause followed. Ludendorff was anxious to fulfil his long-cherished idea of a decisive blow against the British in Belgium, but he considered that their reserves there were still too strong, and so again decided on a diversion—hoping that a heavy blow in

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the south would draw off the British reserves. He had failed to pinch out the Compiègne buttress on the west of his Marne salient; he was now about to attempt the same thing on the east, by attacking on either side of Reims. But he needed an interval for rest and preparation, and the delay was fatal—giving the British and French time to recuperate, and the Americans time to gather strength.

The tactical success of his own blows had been Ludendorff's undoing—in the sense that, yielding to their influence, he had pressed each too far and too long, thus using up his own reserves, and causing an undue interval between each blow. He had followed, not the line of least resistance, but the line of hardening resistance. After the initial break-through, each attack had become strategically a pure direct approach. He had driven in three great wedges, but none had penetrated far enough to sever a vital artery; and this strategic failure left the Germans with an indented front which invited flanking counter-strokes.

On the 15th of July Ludendorff launched his new attack, but its coming was no secret. East of Reims it was foiled by an elastic defence, and west of Reims the German penetration across the Marne merely enmeshed them more deeply to their downfall—for on the 18th of July Foch launched a long-prepared stroke against the other flank of the Marne salient. Here Pétain, who directed the operation, employed the key which Ludendorff lacked, using masses of light tanks to lead a surprise attack—on the Cambrai model. The Germans managed to hold the gates of the salient open long enough to draw their forces back into safety, and straighten their line. But their reserves were depleted. Ludendorff was forced, first to postpone, and then to abandon the offensive in Flanders,

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so that the initiative definitely and finally passed to the Allies.

The nature of the Allied counterstroke on the Marne requires examination. Pétain had asked Foch to assemble two groups of reserves at Beauvais and Epernay respectively, with a view to a counterstroke against the flank of, and subsequent to, any fresh German attack. The first group, under Mangin, was used to break the German attack of the 9th of June, and was then switched to a position on the west face of the Marne salient. Foch planned to use it for the direct purpose of an attack against the rail centre of Soissons. While this was being prepared the intelligence service obtained definite news of the forthcoming German attack near Reims. Foch thereupon determined to anticipate it, not retort to it, by launching his stroke on the 12th of July. Pétain, however, had the contrary idea of letting the Germans come on and entangle themselves, and then of striking at their rear flank. And, somewhat curiously, the French troops were not ready on the 12th of July—so that the battle was fought more according to Pétain's than to Foch's conception. More, but not wholly. For Pétain's plan had been, first, to yield his forward position to the attackers, by holding it lightly, and bring them to a halt in face of the intact rear position ; then to launch local counter-attacks so that the enemy might be drawn to engage their reserves in the new pockets that their attacks on either side of Reims would make ; finally, to unleash Mangin to the real counter-offensive eastward along the base-line of the main Marne salient. Thereby he might close the neck of the vast sack in which the German forces south of the Aisne would be enclosed.

Events and Foch combined to modify this conception. East of Reims the German attack was nullified

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by the elastic defence—a form of tactical indirect approach. But west of Reims the commanders persisted in the old rigid method of defence, and had their line broken. The Germans penetrated beyond the Marne; to avert the danger, Pétain was driven to throw in most of the reserves he had intended for use in his second phase. To replace them, he decided to draw from Mangin and to postpone the latter's counterstroke, already ordered by Foch for the 18th of July. When Foch heard of this order, he promptly countermanded it. Hence the second phase had to be dropped out, so that the German reserves were available to hold Mangin back, and hold open the neck of the sack. The counterstroke soon became a purely direct pressure converging, like Falkenhayn's of 1915 in Poland, on the whole sack and pressing the Germans back out of it.

Foch's governing idea henceforth was simply to keep the initiative and to give the enemy no rest while his own reserves were accumulating. His first step was to free his own lateral railways by a series of local offensives. The first was made by Haig on the 8th of August in front of Amiens. By skilful precautions and deceptions, Rawlinson's 4th Army was doubled, and the attack—led by 450 tanks—was, in its opening, perhaps the most complete surprise of the war. If it soon came to a halt—the directness of its pressure was a natural reason—its initial shock of surprise sufficed to dislocate the moral balance of the German Supreme Command, and by convincing Ludendorff of the moral bankruptcy of his troops led him to declare that peace must be sought by negotiation. Meantime, he said, 'the object of our strategy must be to paralyse the enemy's war-will gradually by a strategic defensive'.

Meantime, however, the Allies evolved a new strategic method. Foch gave the first impulse by ordering

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a succession of attacks at different points. Haig completed its evolution by refusing to agree to Foch's instructions for a continuance of the 4th Army's frontal pressure. Its advance was only resumed after the 3rd and 1st Armies in turn had struck. Hence the allied offensive—although only in the sphere of Haig's and Pétain's control—became a series of rapid blows at different points, each broken off as soon as its initial impetus waned, each so aimed as to pave the way for the next, and all close enough in time and space to react on one another. Thus a check was placed on Ludendorff's power of switching reserves to anticipate the blows, and a progressive tax placed upon his reserve balance—at an economical cost to the Allied resources. This method, if not a true indirect approach, appears at least a border-line case. If it did not take the line of least expectation, it avoided the line of natural expectation. If it did not take the line of least resistance, it never continued along the line of hardening resistance. In effect, it was a negative form of the indirect approach.

In view of the moral and numerical decline of the German forces, this method sufficed, for a time at any rate, to ensure a continuous advance and gradual weakening of the German resistance. The clear evidence of this decline and Haig's consequent assurance that he could break the Hindenburg Line, where the German reserves were strongest, caused Foch to relinquish the method in favour of a general and simultaneous offensive at the end of September.

The plan was for a directly convergent pressure upon the vast salient formed by the German front in France. It was hoped that the two Allied wings—formed by the British and Americans respectively—would, as they closed in, cut off a large part of the German armies in the salient. This hope was based on

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the idea that the Ardennes formed an almost impassable back wall with narrow exits on the flanks. One may add, incidentally, that this idea of the Ardennes must have arisen from a lack of knowledge of the district—for it is well-roaded, and most of it is rolling rather than mountainous country.¹

Originally, on Pershing's suggestion, the plan had contained a certain degree of indirectness of approach. His proposal was that the American army should exploit its local success in erasing the Saint Mihiel salient by an advance towards Briey, and past Metz, with the aim of getting astride the German communications in Lorraine and menacing their western line of retreat to the Rhine. But Haig objected to this move as divergent from, instead of convergent with, the other Allied attacks. And Foch changed his plan accordingly, discarding Pershing's project. The American army, in consequence, had to transfer its effort westwards and hastily mount an attack, with a bare week's preparation, in the Meuse-Argonne sector. Here the prolonged pressure along the line of hardening resistance resulted in high cost and profound confusion, besides proving unnecessary to ease Haig's advance through the Hindenburg Line.

There, the course of events tended to demonstrate that a direct approach, given overwhelming fire superiority and a morally decaying opponent, can break into the enemy's position—but cannot break him up. By the 11th of November, the date of the Armistice, the German forces, at the sacrifice of their rearguards, were safely out of the salient and back on a shortened and straightened line. The Allied advance had practically come to a standstill—less because of

¹ It would seem that a similar misjudgement led the Allied Command in May 1940 to discount the possibility that the German mechanized forces would attempt that route of invasion.

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German resistance than because of the difficulty of its own maintenance and supply across the devastated areas. Under these conditions, a direct approach had merely helped the Germans to slip away faster than they could be followed.

Fortunately, the last phase of the military offensive mattered little. The moral blow which the initial surprise of the 8th of August had given to the German Command was completed, and made mortal, by an indirect approach in a far-distant theatre. This was the Allied offensive on the Salonika front. Aimed at a sector where the terrain was so difficult that the defenders were few, it soon broke through. Once this had happened, the difficult mountain country hindered the defenders switching their reserves laterally to block the progress of the advance down the line of least resistance. With their army split in two, the war-weary Bulgarians craved an armistice. This achievement not only knocked away the first prop of the Central Alliance but opened the way for an advance upon Austria's rear. The menace became closer when an Italian offensive fell on, and broke through, Austria's morally shaken and physically exhausted front; for with Austria's prompt capitulation her territory and railways were available to the Allies as a base of operations against Germany's back door. In September, General von Gallwitz had told the German Chancellor that such a contingency would be 'decisive'.

This menace, together with the heightened moral effect of the blockade—that other, grand-strategical, indirect approach—on a people now hunger-stricken and hopeless, constituted a pair of spurs by which in the last days the German Government was urged towards surrender. They were spurs applied to a bolting steed, but a crack of the whip had made it bolt—the news of the collapse of Bulgaria, reinforced by the

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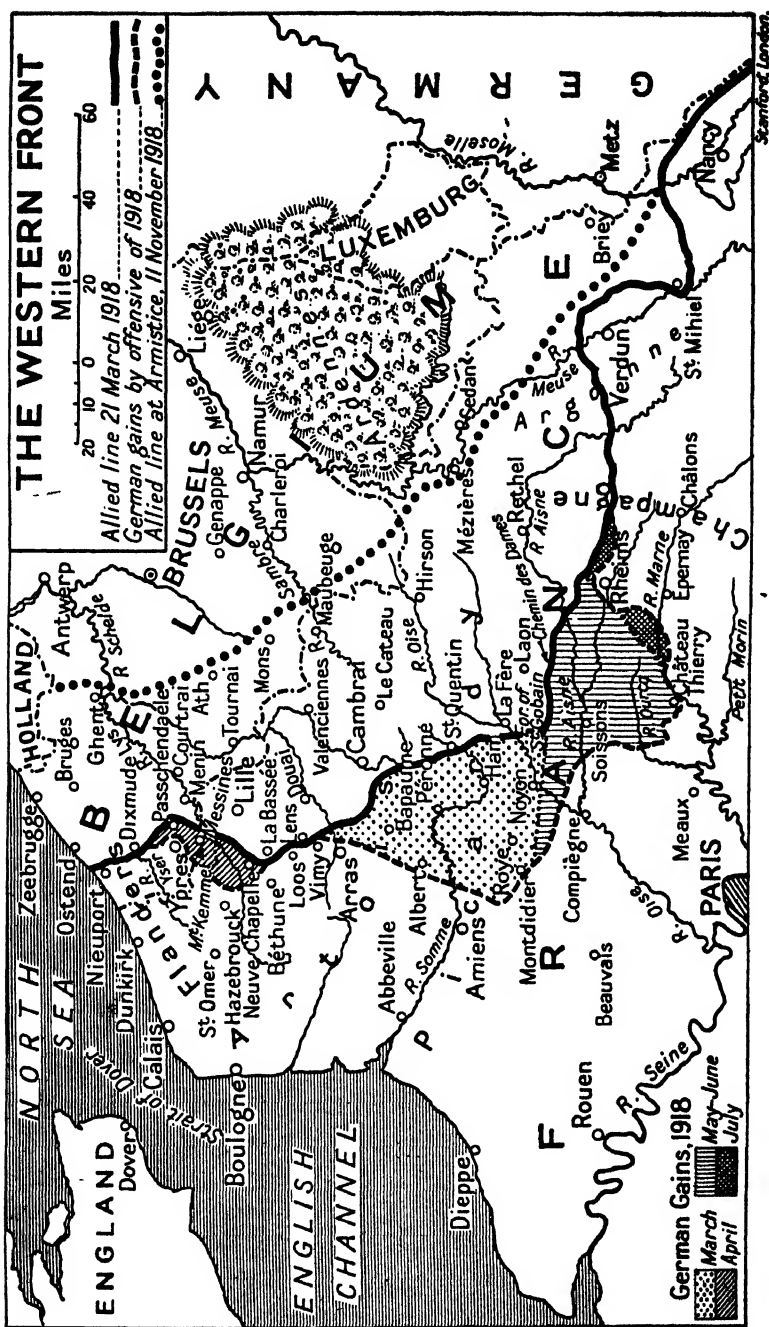
first reports of the renewal of the frontal attack in France.

The Supreme Command lost its nerve—only for a matter of days, but that was sufficient, and recovery too late. On the 29th of September Hindenburg and Ludendorff took the precipitate decision to appeal for an armistice, saying that the collapse of the Bulgarian front had upset all their dispositions—‘troops destined for the Western front had had to be dispatched there’. This had ‘fundamentally changed’ the situation in view of the attacks then being launched on the Western front; for though these ‘had so far been beaten off, their continuance must be reckoned with’.

This clause refers to Foch’s general offensive. The American attack in the Meuse–Argonne had begun on the 26th of September, but had come practically to a standstill by the 28th. A Franco-Belgo-British attack had opened in Flanders on the 28th; if unpleasant, it did not look really menacing. But on the morning of the 29th Haig’s main blow was falling on the Hindenburg Line, and the early news was disquieting.

In this emergency, Prince Max was called to be Chancellor—to negotiate a peace move, with his international reputation for moderation and honour as its covering pledge. To bargain effectively, and without confession of defeat, he needed, and asked, a breathing space ‘of ten, eight, even four days, before I have to appeal to the enemy’. But Hindenburg merely reiterated that ‘the gravity of the military situation admits of no delay’, and insisted that ‘a peace offer to our enemies be issued at once’.

Hence, on the 3rd of October, the appeal for an immediate armistice went out to President Wilson. It was an open confession of defeat to the world. And even before this—on the 1st of October—the Supreme



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Command had undermined their own home front by communicating the same impression to a meeting of the leaders of all political parties.

Men who had so long been kept in the dark were blinded by the sudden light. All the forces of discord and weakness received an immense impulse.

Within a few days the Supreme Command became more cheerful, even optimistic, when it saw that the British success in breaking into the Hindenburg Line had not been followed by an actual break-through of the fighting front. More encouragement came from reports of a slackening in the force of the Allies' attacks, particularly in the exploitation of opportunities. Ludendorff still wanted an armistice, but only to give his troops a rest as a prelude to further resistance, and to ensure a secure withdrawal to a shortened defensive line on the frontier. By the 17th of October he even felt he could do it without a rest. It was less that the situation had changed than that his impression of it had been revised. The situation had never been quite so bad as he had pictured it on the 29th of September. But his first impression had now spread throughout the political circles and public of Germany—as the ripples spread when a pebble has been dropped in a pool. The 'home-front' began to crumble later, but it crumbled quicker than the battle-front.

On the 23rd of October, President Wilson replied to the German requests by a note which virtually required an unconditional surrender. Ludendorff wished to carry on the struggle in the hope that a successful defence of the German frontier might damp the determination of the Allies. But the situation had passed beyond his control, the nation's will-power was broken, and his advice was in discredit. On the 26th of October he was forced to resign.

Then for thirty-six hours the Chancellor lay in coma

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from an overdose of sleeping draught. When he returned to his office on the evening of the 3rd of November, not only Turkey but Austria had capitulated. The back gate was open. Next day revolution broke out in Germany, and swept rapidly over the country, fanned, as peace negotiations were delayed, by the Kaiser's reluctance to abdicate. Compromise with the revolutionaries was the only chance, and on the 9th of November Prince Max handed over to the Socialist Ebert. The German armistice plenipotentiaries were already with Foch. At five a.m., on the 11th of November, they signed the terms; at 11 a.m. the war was over.

The issue of the war had been finally decided on the 29th of September—decided in the mind of the German Command. Ludendorff and his associates had then 'cracked', and the sound went echoing backwards until it had resounded throughout the whole of Germany. Nothing could catch it or stop it. The Command might recover its nerve, the actual military position might improve, but the moral impression—as ever in war—was decisive.

Among the causes of Germany's surrender the blockade is seen to be the most fundamental. Its existence is the surest answer to the question whether but for the revolution the German armies could have stood firm on their own frontiers. For even if the German people, roused to a supreme effort in visible defence of their own soil, could have held the allied armies at bay, the end could only have been postponed—because of the grip of sea-power, Britain's historic weapon.

But in hastening the surrender, in preventing a continuance of the war into 1919, military action ranks foremost. That conclusion does not imply that at the moment of the Armistice Germany's military power

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was broken or her armies decisively beaten, nor that the Armistice was a mistaken concession. Rather does the record of the last 'hundred days', when sifted, confirm the immemorial lesson that the true aim in war is the mind of the hostile rulers, not the bodies of their troops; that the balance between victory and defeat turns on mental impressions and only indirectly on physical blows. It was the shock of being surprised, and the feeling that he was powerless to counter potential strategic moves, that shook Ludendorff's nerve more than the loss of prisoners, guns, and acreage.

PART III

Chapter XVII

HITLER'S STRATEGY

The course of Hitler's campaigns, before and since the outbreak of actual war, has provided the most striking demonstration of the method traced in the earlier part of this book. He has given the strategy of indirect approach a new extension, logistically and psychologically, both in the field and in the forum.

It is wise in war not to underrate your opponent. It is equally important to understand his methods, and how his mind works. Such understanding is the necessary foundation of a successful effort to foresee and forestall his moves. The peaceful Powers have suffered a lot from 'missing the bus' through their slowness to gauge what he would next attempt. A nation might profit a lot if the advisory organs of government included an 'enemy department', covering all spheres of war and studying the problems of the war from the enemy's point of view—so that, in this state of detachment, it might succeed in predicting what he was likely to do next.

Nothing may seem more strange to the future historian than the way that the governments of the democracies failed to anticipate the course which Hitler would pursue. For never has a man of such immense ambition so clearly disclosed beforehand both the general process and particular methods by

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which he was seeking to fulfil it. *Mein Kampf*, together with his speeches and other utterances, provide abundant clues to his direction and sequence of action. If this amazingly clear self-revelation of how his mind works is the best evidence that what he has achieved is not a matter of accident, nor of mere opportunism, it is also the clearest confirmation of the proverbial saying—'What fools men are'. Even Napoleon did not show such contemptuous disregard for his opponents, and for the risks of unveiling his intentions. Perhaps Hitler's apparent carelessness in this respect is due to a realization that men easily miss what is right under their eye, that concealment can often be found in the obvious, and that in some cases the most direct approach can become the least expected—just as the art of secrecy lies in being so open about most things that the few things that matter are not even suspected to exist.

Lawrence of Arabia remarked of Lenin that he was the only man who had thought out a revolution, carried it out, and consolidated it. That observation can be applied also to Hitler—with the addition that he had 'written it out'. It is clear, too, that he had profited by studying the methods of the Bolshevik revolution. Not only in gaining power, but in extending it. It was Lenin who enunciated the axiom that 'the soundest strategy in war is to postpone operations until the moral disintegration of the enemy renders the delivery of the mortal blow both possible and easy'. There is a marked resemblance between this and Hitler's saying that 'our real wars will in fact all be fought before military operations begin'. In Rauschning's account of a discussion on the subject, in *Hitler Speaks*, he declared—'How to achieve the moral breakdown of the enemy before the war has started—that is the problem that interests me. Who-

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ever has experienced war at the front will want to refrain from all avoidable bloodshed.'

In concentrating on that problem Hitler has diverged from the orthodox trend of German military thought which, for a century, had concentrated on battle—and had led most of the other nations along the same narrow path of military theory. Accepting the Prussian philosopher of war, Clausewitz, as their master, they blindly swallowed his undigested aphorisms. Such as—'The bloody solution of the crisis, the effort for the destruction of the enemy's forces, is the first-born son of war.' 'Only great and general battles can produce great results.' 'Blood is the price of victory.' 'Let us not hear of generals who conquer without bloodshed.' Clausewitz rejected the idea that 'there is a skilful method of disarming and overcoming an enemy without great bloodshed, and that this is the proper tendency of the Art of War'. He dismissed it as a notion born in the imagination of 'philanthropists'. He took no account of the fact that it might be dictated by enlightened self-interest, by the desire for an issue profitable to the nation: not merely a gladiatorial decision. The outcome of his teaching, applied by unthinking disciples, was to incite generals to seek battle at the *first* opportunity, instead of creating an *advantageous* opportunity. Thereby the art of war was reduced in 1914–18 to a process of mutual mass-slaughter.

Whatever the limit of his lights, Hitler has far transcended these Clausewitzian bounds. While for him 'war is life', the aim of conducting it in such new ways as to 'preserve the precious German blood' recalls the keynote which Napoleon sounded up to 1805—'All my care will be to gain victory with the least possible shedding of blood.' But in the ways of fulfilling this, Hitler has gone beyond Napoleon. Rauschnig quotes

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him as saying—'People have killed only when they could not achieve their aim in other ways. . . . There is a broadened strategy, with intellectual weapons. . . . Why should I demoralize the enemy by military means if I can do so better and more cheaply in other ways?' 'Our strategy is to destroy the enemy from within, to conquer him through himself.'

The extent to which Hitler has given a new direction and wider meaning to the German doctrine of war may best be seen by comparing his theory and practice with that of General Ludendorff—the director of Germany's war-effort in the last war, and Hitler's former associate in the abortive 1923 project to seize control of Germany by a 'march on Berlin'.

After the establishment of the totalitarian state, and after he had had nearly twenty years for reflection on the lessons of the last war, Ludendorff set forth his conclusions as to future 'totalitarian warfare'. He opened with a heavy attack on the theories of Clausewitz which had been the foundation of the German doctrine in 1914. To Ludendorff, their fault was not that they went too far in the way of unlimited violence, regardless of cost, but that they did not go far enough. He criticized Clausewitz for allowing policy too much importance, not too little. As typical of Clausewitz, he cited a passage concluding—'The political goal is the *end*, and warfare is a means leading to it, and a means can never be thought of without a certain end.' In Ludendorff's view, this was out of date. The totalitarian principle demanded that in war a nation should place everything at its service; and, in peace, at the service of the next war. War was the highest expression of the national 'will to live', and politics must therefore be subservient to the conduct of war.

Reading Ludendorff's book, it became clear that

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the main difference between his theory and Clausewitz's was that the former had come to think of war as a means without an end—unless making the nation into an army be considered an end in itself. This was hardly so new as Ludendorff appeared to imagine. Sparta tried it, and in the end succumbed to self-inflicted paralysis. With the aim of developing the nation for war, of creating a super-Sparta, Ludendorff's primary concern was to ensure 'the psychical unity of the people'. Towards this, he sought to cultivate a religion of nationalism through which all women would accept that their noblest role was to bear sons to 'bear the burden of the totalitarian war', and all men would develop their powers for that purpose—in short, to breed, and be bred, for slaughter. The other positive suggestions which Ludendorff offered towards achieving 'psychical unity' amounted to little more than the age-old prescription of suppressing everyone who might express, or even entertain, views contrary to those of the High Command.

Another condition on which Ludendorff insisted was the need for a self-sufficient national economic system suited to the demands of totalitarian war. From this, he appeared to realize that military power rests on an economic foundation. Yet, curiously, when he dwelt on the crippling difficulties caused in the last war by the Allied blockade, he did not see how this admission reflected on his belief that wars are decided by battle between the armies. On this score, he considered that Germany's old master deserved praise—'Clausewitz only thinks of the annihilation of the hostile armies in battle'. In Ludendorff's view this remained an 'immutable principle'—whereas in Hitler's view the true aim of the war-leader should be to produce the capitulation of the hostile armies without a battle.

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Ludendorff's picture of the way that the next war would be waged was merely an intensified reproduction of the offensives he had carried out in 1918—which had been brilliant in their opening but barren in their issue. For him the offensive was still a battle-process in which the infantry would be helped forward by artillery, machine-guns, mortars, and tanks until it 'overwhelms the enemy in a man-to-man fight'. All movements should lead to battle; mechanization would merely quicken the rush to battle.

It was not that Ludendorff had any moral or even soldierly objection to the more widely spread forms of warfare. He remarked that the requirements of totalitarian warfare 'will ever ignore the cheap theoretical desire to abolish unrestricted U-boat warfare', while aircraft would in future combine with submarines at sinking every ship which tried to reach the enemy's ports—'even vessels sailing under neutral flags'. And in regard to the question of striking direct at the civil population, he emphasized that a time would come when 'bombing squadrons must inexorably and without pity be sent against them'. But on military grounds, which for him were paramount, the air force must first be used to help in beating the opposing army. Only then should it be unleashed against the interior of the opposing country.

While welcoming every new weapon and instrument, he added them to his armoury rather than fitted them into any grand strategic pattern. He conveyed no clear idea, and seemed to have none, of the relationship between the different elements in war. His message was, in brief—multiply every kind of force as much as you can, and you will get somewhere—but where, he neither wondered nor worried. The one point on which he was really clear was that 'the military Commander-in-Chief must lay down his

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instructions for the political leaders, and the latter must follow and fulfil them in the service of war'. In other words, those who are responsible for national policy must give him a blank cheque drawn on the present resources of and future prosperity of the nation.

Much as there was in common between Ludendorff and Hitler in their conception of the race, the state, and the German people's right to dominate, their differences were quite as great—especially in regard to method.

While Ludendorff demanded the absurdity that strategy should control policy—which is like saying the tool should decide its own task—Hitler solved that problem by combining the two functions in one person. Thus he enjoyed the same advantage as Alexander and Caesar in the ancient world, or Frederick the Great and Napoleon in later times. This gave him an unlimited opportunity, such as no pure strategist would enjoy, to prepare and develop his means for the end he had in view. At the same time he had early grasped what the soldier, by his very profession, is less ready to recognize—that the military weapon is but one of the means that serve the purposes of war: one out of the assortment which grand strategy can employ.

While there are many causes for which a state goes to war, its fundamental object can be epitomized as that of ensuring the continuance of its policy—in face of the determination of the opposing state to pursue a contrary policy. In the human will lies the source and mainspring of conflict. For a state to gain its object in war it has to change this adverse will into compliance with its own policy. Once this is realized, the military principle of 'destroying the main armed forces on the battlefield', which Clausewitz's disciples exalted to a paramount position, fits into its

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proper place along with the other instruments of grand strategy—which include the more oblique kinds of military action as well as economic pressure, propaganda, and diplomacy. Instead of giving excessive emphasis to one means, which circumstances may render ineffective, it is wiser to choose and combine whichever are the most suitable, most penetrative, and most conservative of effort—i.e. which will subdue the opposing will at the lowest war-cost and minimum injury to the post-war prospect. For the most decisive victory is of no value if a nation be bled white in gaining it.

It should be the aim of grand strategy to discover and pierce the Achilles' heel of the opposing government's power to make war. And strategy, in turn, should seek to penetrate a joint in the harness of the opposing forces. To apply one's strength where the opponent is strong weakens oneself disproportionately to the effect attained. To strike with strong effect, one must strike at weakness.

It is thus more potent, as well as more economical, to disarm the enemy than to attempt his destruction by hard fighting. For the 'mauling' method entails not only a dangerous cost in exhaustion but the risk that chance may determine the issue. A strategist should think in terms of paralysing, not of killing. Even on the lower plane of warfare, a man killed is merely one man less, whereas a man unnerved is a highly infectious carrier of fear, capable of spreading an epidemic of panic. On a higher plane of warfare, the impression made on the mind of the opposing commander can nullify the whole fighting power that his troops possess. And on a still higher plane, psychological pressure on the government of a country may suffice to cancel all the resources at its command—so that the sword drops from a paralysed hand.

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To repeat the keynote of the initial chapter: the analysis of war shows that while the nominal strength of a country is represented by its numbers and resources this muscular development is dependent on the state of its internal organs and nerve-system—upon its stability of control, morale, and supply. Direct pressure always tends to harden and consolidate the resistance of an opponent—like snow which is squeezed into a snowball, the more compact it becomes, the slower it is to melt. Alike in policy and in strategy—or to put it another way, in the strategy of both the diplomatic and the military spheres—the indirect approach is the most effective way to upset the opponent's balance, psychological and physical, thereby making possible his overthrow.

The true purpose of strategy is to diminish the possibility of resistance. And from this follows another axiom—that to ensure attaining *an* objective one should have alternative objectives. An attack that converges on one point should threaten, and be able to diverge against another. Only by this flexibility of aim can strategy be attuned to the uncertainty of war.

Whether by instinct or reflection, Hitler acquired an acute grasp of these strategic truths of which few soldiers have ever been aware. He applied this psychological strategy in the political campaign by which he gained control of Germany—exploiting the weak points of the Weimar Republic, playing on human weakness, alternatively playing off capitalist and socialist interests against each other, appearing to turn first in one direction and then in another, so that by successive indirect steps he approached his goal.

Once his control of Germany was achieved, in 1933, the same compound process was given a wider extension. Having negotiated, the next year, a ten-year peace-pact with Poland to cover his eastern flank, in

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1935 he threw off the armament limitations imposed by the Versailles Treaty, and in 1936 ventured the military reoccupation of the Rhineland. That same year he definitely began 'camouflaged war' by supporting General Franco's bid to overthrow the Spanish Republican Government—as an indirect approach, in conjunction with Italy, against the strategic rear of France and Britain. Having thus weakened their position in the west, and having also covered himself in the west by refortifying the Rhineland, he was able to turn eastwards—to make moves that were further indirect strokes at the strategic foundations of the Western Powers.

In March 1938 he marched into Austria, and thus laid bare the flank of Czechoslovakia, while breaking the girdle which France had woven round Germany after the last war. In September 1938 he secured, by the Munich agreement, not merely the return of the Sudetenland but the strategic paralysis of Czechoslovakia. In March 1939 he occupied the country he had already paralysed, and thereby enveloped the flank of Poland.

By this series of practically bloodless manœuvres, carried out by 'peace-marches' under cover of a smoke-screen of plausible propaganda, he had not only destroyed the former French domination of central Europe and strategic encirclement of Germany, but reversed it in his own favour. This process was the modern equivalent, on a wider scale and higher plane, of the classical art of manœuvring for position before offering battle. Throughout its course Germany's strength had been growing, both directly by the vast development of her armaments, and indirectly by subtraction from the strength of her potential main opponents—through lopping off their allies and loosening their strategic roots.

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Thus by the spring of 1939 Hitler had decreasing cause to fear an open fight. And at this critical moment he was helped by a false move on Britain's part—the guarantee suddenly offered to Poland and Rumania, each of them strategically isolated, without first securing any assurance from Russia, the only power which could give them effective support. Such a blind step was the rashest reversal of a policy of appeasement and retreat that has ever been conceived. By their timing, these guarantees were bound to act as a provocation. By their placing, in parts of Europe inaccessible to our forces, they provided an almost irresistible temptation. Thereby the Western Powers undermined the essential basis of the only type of strategy which their now inferior strength made practicable for them. For instead of being able to check aggression by presenting a strong front to any attack in the west, they gave Hitler an easy chance of breaking a weak front and thus gaining an initial triumph.

Hitler had always planned, as Rauschnig shows, to direct his surprise strokes against weak or isolated countries while throwing on his opponents' shoulders the main burden of attack—he had far more real respect for the power of modern defence than any of the Allied soldiers or statesmen. Now they had given him an easy opportunity to do so. In such circumstances his principles of strategy obviously pointed to an immediate attempt to make a pact with Russia that would ensure her detachment. Once that was secured, Hitler was 'sitting pretty'. If the Allies declared war in fulfilment of their obligations they would automatically forfeit the advantages of defence and be committed to an inherently offensive strategy—without the necessary resources and under the most unfavourable conditions. If they merely tapped at the Siegfried Line they would manifest their impotence,

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and forfeit prestige. If they pressed the attack, they would only pile up their losses and weaken their own chance of subsequent resistance when Hitler was free to turn westwards.

The only way in which they might have extricated themselves from this awkward position, without allowing Hitler to have his way entirely, was by adopting the 'sanctions' policy of economic and diplomatic boycott, coupled with the supply of arms to the victim of aggression. This would have done Poland quite as much good, and done much less harm to their own prestige and prospects, than a declaration of war under such adverse conditions.

In the event, the deliberate offensive which the French attempted made no impression on the Siegfried Line, while the way it was 'boosted' meant that its failure was all the more damaging to the Allies' prestige. Coupled with the Germans' swift success in Poland, it had the effect of increasing the neutrals' fear of Germany while shaking practical confidence in the Allies even more than another compromise could have done.

Hitler was now able to consolidate his military gains and exploit his political advantages behind the cover of his Western defences that the would-be rescuers of Poland were palpably incapable of forcing. He might have maintained this secure defensive until the French and British peoples grew weary of war, as its farcical aspect became plainer. But the Allied statesmen were led to take the offensive in talk long before they had the means to translate it into effective action. All they succeeded in doing was to provoke consequences which they were unready to meet. For their line of talk gave Hitler a fresh opportunity, as well as an incentive, to forestall them in 'opening up' the war. While many people in Britain and France

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were dreaming of how the small neutral countries adjoining Germany might open a way to her flanks, Hitler turned the Allies' flanks by the invasion of no less than five of these countries—having an aggressor's characteristic freedom from scruples.

It was no new conception on his part. As far back as 1934 he had described to Rauschning and others how he might seize by surprise the chief ports of the Scandinavian peninsula through a simultaneous series of coups carried out by small sea-borne expeditions, covered by the air force. The way would be prepared by his partisans on the spot, and the actual move would be made on the pretext of protecting these countries against invasion by other Powers. 'It would be a daring, but interesting undertaking, never before attempted in the history of the world'—there spoke the artist of war. This striking conception was fulfilled in the plan that was executed on the 9th of April 1940, and succeeded beyond expectation. Whereas he had reckoned that his coups might fail at several points, while counting for success on securing a majority of the strategic points, he gained every one without check—although he had audaciously stretched his fingers as far north as Narvik.

His amazingly easy success, sealed by the equally easy frustration of the Allies' attempted counter-invasion of Norway, must naturally have encouraged him to attempt the other part of his original design. This was to seize the Low Countries as a base for air and submarine attack on England. Whether he had definitely extended his plan to embrace the defeat of France we do not yet know for certain, and must wait for history to tell us. (Successful war-leaders are sometimes as much surprised by the extent of their own success as those they take by surprise, and their subsequent account of it is not historical evidence.) When

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discussing the circumstances in which he would risk a great war, he had expressed his intention to remain on the defensive in the West and leave the enemy to take the first offensive step, whereupon he would pounce upon Scandinavia and the Low Countries, improve his strategic position, and make a peace proposal to the Western Powers. 'If they don't like it, they can try to drive me out. In any case they will have to bear the main burden of attack.' On the other hand, perhaps looking further ahead, he had remarked—'I shall manœuvre France right out of her Maginot Line without losing a single soldier.' Granted the hyperbole—for his losses were small in comparison with his gains—that was what he accomplished last summer.

The most significant feature of the Western campaign was Hitler's care to avoid any direct assault, and his continued use of the indirect approach—despite his immense superiority in modern means of attack. Although he had twice as many divisions as the French and British combined, and an advantage of four to one in aircraft and tanks—odds which would have justified him in attacking the strongest position—he did not attempt to penetrate the Maginot Line. Instead, by his 'baited offensive' against the two small neutrals, Holland and Belgium, he managed to lure the Allies out of their defences on the Belgian frontier. Then, when they had advanced deep into Belgium, their march being deliberately unimpeded by his air force, he struck in behind them—with a thrust at the uncovered hinge of the French advance.

This deadly thrust was delivered by a striking force so small, if composed of armoured divisions, as to suggest that it may only have been intended as a 'try on'. And the fact that it came off was chiefly due to the recklessness, or perilous conventionality, of the French

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Command in concentrating almost the whole of their left wing for a massive advance to offer battle in Belgium, while leaving a few second-rate divisions to guard the pivotal sector facing the Ardennes—a wooded and hilly area which they assumed to be too difficult as a line of approach for mechanized divisions. The Germans, by contrast, in exploiting its possibilities for surprise, had shown their appreciation of the oft-taught lesson that natural obstacles are inherently less formidable than human resistance in strong defences.

As for the nature of Hitler's aim, the explanation may well be that his was a 'plan with branches'—adaptable to alternative objectives, according to the resistance encountered. Such planned opportunism would be more creditable to his strategic sense, and more characteristic of his practice, than the rigidly preconceived plan which he claimed, in his post-victory speech, to have followed. It is clear, too, that the rapid progress of the German penetration beyond Sedan benefited much from the fact that it successively threatened alternative objectives, and kept the French in doubt as to its real direction—first, whether it was towards Paris or the rear of the forces in Belgium; then, when the German armoured divisions swung westwards, whether they were moving on Amiens or Lille. 'Selling the dummy' first one way and then the other, they swept on to the Channel coast.

The tactics of the German forces corresponded to their strategy—avoiding head-on assaults, and always seeking to find 'soft spots' through which they could infiltrate along the line of least resistance. While the Allied statesmen, vitally misunderstanding modern warfare, called on their armies to meet the invasion by 'furious unrelenting assault', the German tank tide swept round and past their clumsy infantry mops.

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(The Allied troops might perhaps have stemmed it if they had not been told to cast away the idea of defending barrier-lines: nothing could have been less effective than their attempts at counter-attack.) While the Allied commanders thought in terms of battle, the new German commanders sought to eliminate it by producing the strategic paralysis of their opponents—using their tanks, dive-bombers, and parachutists to spread confusion and dislocate communications. The outcome cast an ironical reflection on the complacent assumption of one of the Allied chiefs that the opposing generals would be handicapped by the fact that none of them had been more than captains in the last war. Eight years earlier Hitler had criticized the German generals as 'blind to the new, the surprising things'; as imaginatively sterile; as being 'imprisoned in the coils of their technical knowledge'. Their successors, it is clear, had learnt to appreciate new ideas.

But this exploitation of new weapons, tactics, and strategy does not cover all the factors in Germany's run of success. In Hitler's warfare the 'indirect approach has been carried into wider fields and deeper strata. Here he profited by studying the Bolshevik technique of revolution, just as the new German Army had profited by applying the British-evolved technique of mechanized warfare—whether he knew it or not, the basic methods in both spheres could be traced back to the technique of Mongol warfare under Jenghiz Khan. To prepare the way for his offensive, he sought to find influential adherents in the other country who would undermine its resistance, make trouble in his interest, and be ready to form a new government compliant to his aims. Bribery was unnecessary—he counted on self-seeking ambition, authoritarian inclination, and party-spirit to provide him with willing and unwitting agents among the ruling classes. Then

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to open the way, at the chosen moment, he aimed to use an infiltration of storm-troopers who would cross the frontier while peace still prevailed, as commercial travellers or holiday-makers, and don the enemy's uniform when the word came; their role was to sabotage communications, spread false reports, and, if possible, kidnap the other country's leading men. This disguised vanguard would in turn be backed up by air-borne troops.

In the warfare he intended to stage, frontal advances would be either a bluff or a walking-on part. The leading role would always be played by the rear attack in one of its forms. He was contemptuous of assaults and bayonet-charges—the A B C of the traditional soldier. His way in warfare began with a double D—demoralization and disorganization. Above all, war would be waged by suggestion—by words instead of weapons, propaganda replacing the projectile. Just as an artillery bombardment was used in the last war to crush the enemy's defences before the infantry advanced, so a moral bombardment would be used in future. All types of ammunition would be used, but especially revolutionary propaganda. 'Generals, in spite of the lessons of the war, want to behave like chivalrous knights. They think war should be waged like the tourneys of the Middle Ages. I have no use for knights. I need revolutions.'

The object of war was to make the enemy capitulate. If his will to resist could be paralysed, killing was superfluous—besides being a clumsy and expensive way of attaining the object. The indirect way of injecting germs into the body of the opposing nation, to produce disease in its will, was likely to be far more effective.

Such is Hitler's theory of war with psychological weapons. If we are to check him we must understand

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it. The value of its application to the military sphere has been proved. To paralyse the enemy's military nerve-system is, clearly, a more economical form of operation than to pound his flesh. Its application to the political sphere has been proved in effect, but not in content. It is open to question whether it would have succeeded in demoralizing resistance if it had not been backed by overwhelming mechanical force. Even in the case of France, the German superiority in modern weapon-power was large enough to explain her collapse, apart from any decay or disorder of the national will. Force can always crush force, given sufficient superiority. It cannot crush ideas. Being intangible they are invulnerable, save to psychological penetration, and their resilience has baffled innumerable believers in force. None of them perhaps were so aware of the power of ideas as Hitler. But the increasing extent to which he has had to rely on the backing of force as his power has extended, forms increasing cause for doubt whether he has not over-estimated the value of his technique in converting ideas to his purpose. For ideas that do not spring from the truth of experience have a relatively brief impetus—and a sharp recoil.

Hitler, a master of strategy, has given that art a new development. He has also mastered, better than any of his opponents, the first stage of grand strategy—that of developing and co-ordinating all forms of warlike activity, and all the possible instruments which may be used to operate against the enemy's will. But he would seem, like Napoleon, to have an inadequate grasp of the higher level of grand strategy—that of conducting war with a far-sighted regard to the state of the peace that will follow. To do this effectively, a man must be more than a strategist; he must be a leader and a philosopher combined. While

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strategy is the very opposite of morality, as it is largely concerned with the art of deception, grand strategy tends to coincide with morality: through having always to keep in view the ultimate goal of the efforts it is directing.

In trying to prove their irresistibility in attack the Germans have weakened their own defences in many ways—strategic, economic, and, above all, psychological. As their forces have spread over Europe, bringing misery without securing peace, they have scattered widespread the germs of resentment from which resistance to their ideas may develop. And to these germs their own troops have become more susceptible from being exposed to contact with the people of the occupied countries, and made sensitive to the feelings they inspire. This is likely to damp the martial enthusiasm which Hitler has so assiduously stimulated, and to deepen their longing for home. The sense of being friendless reinforces the effect of staleness, opening the way for the infiltration of war-weariness—as well as of counter-ideas.

Here is opportunity—which could be developed by a fuller vision of grand strategy on our side. So long as we remain invincible, that opportunity will grow. Ours is a simpler goal to attain than Hitler's. To impose his peace he needs complete victory—which he cannot attain without conquering us—and has then to solve the problem of holding down all the conquered peoples. To gain the peace that we desire we have to convince his people that he cannot gain such a victory as will give them a satisfactory peace, and that the future holds no hope until, realizing the emptiness of victory, they give up such a futile pursuit.

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